**You Must Work Twice as Hard for Half as Much: Racial Socialization, Racial Identity, and Racism Awareness in Adolescence**

by

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## DEDICATION

To the legacy of hard work and racial pride instilled in my family through my paternal and maternal grandmothers – *Savannah Johnson and Sandra Simmons*. This work is in honor of the obstacles encountered, sacrifices made, and perseverance exuded.

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## ABSTRACT

Scholars who examine racism at the individual level often focus on experiences of racial discrimination, or interpersonal racism. This incredibly frequent experience for Black adolescents—that is, occurring for over 90% of Black adolescents annually (Pachter & Garcia-Coll, 2009)—is associated with social, psychological, and academic consequences (for review, see Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). These racially discriminatory acts may be particularly impactful as cognitive abilities increase during adolescence (Steinberg, 2005), aligning with adolescents' ability to understand the complexities of race and racism (Jones et al., 2020). Early adolescence is a developmental period characterized by cognitive maturation, social perspective-taking, and identity exploration (Quintana, 1994; Phinney, 1998; Steinberg, 2005). Maturation in race-based cognitions and increases in racial discrimination experiences during adolescence make this developmental period a critical time to investigate Black adolescents' awareness of racism and the underlying mechanisms of their perceptions of racial discrimination. Critical consciousness refers to the process by which marginalized communities analyze, navigate, and challenge systems of oppression (Freire, 1970; Seider et al., 2017). Racism awareness is a component of critical consciousness, such that it captures Black adolescents' understanding of racial oppression.

The central analytical theme the dissertation studies is to unpack Black adolescents' understanding of systemic level attributions to the racial performance gap between Black and White students. Situating the examination of Black adolescents' understanding of racism within the school context is important because school—including relationships with peers and teachers,

and exposure to information—is a primary context that shapes adolescents' understanding of themselves and the world (for a review, see Eccles & Roeser, 2011). In this dissertation, I examined Black early adolescents' (Grades 6 and 8) understanding of the systemic factors related to racial educational disparities for Black youth (e.g., racism awareness). I examined how racial context (i.e., racial socialization, racial identity, racial discrimination) shapes Black adolescents' awareness of racism and perceptions of discrimination.

The sample included 271 sixth-grade adolescents ($M_{age}$ = 11.11, $SD$ = 0.42) and 196 eighth-grade adolescents ($M_{age}$ = 13.14, $SD$ = 0.46), all of whom self-identified as "African American/Black." In Study 1, results from a cross-lagged panel analysis revealed that racial barriers messages and racial public regard in Grade 6 positively predicted racism awareness two years later. Adolescents' racism awareness in Grade 6 was not associated with racial identity or racial socialization in Grade 8. In Study 2, racism awareness moderated the association between racial barriers messages and racial discrimination, and the association between behavioral messages and racial discrimination. Black adolescents who received more racial barriers and behavioral messages and had higher levels of racism awareness perceived more instances of discrimination than their peers who received fewer racial barriers and behavioral messages. Limitations and future directions are discussed.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

A video of a White male resource officer slamming a Black female middle school student goes viral, and we later learn that all charges against the officer are dropped (Andone, 2017). In other headlines, we learn of the fatal shooting of a Black boy and the subsequent acquittal of the murderer (Alvarez & Buckley, 2013; del Valle & Ellis, 2019; Williams & Smith, 2015). These are just two examples of the many racist realities and racial inequities that Black youth are exposed to and must make sense of daily. Black adolescents' exposure, indirect or direct, to manifestations of racism (e.g., racial profiling, police brutality of Black bodies, inequitable educational resources) may prompt these youth to explore the meaning of these events and the meaning of race and racism within the United States. Negative race-based interactions (e.g., racial discrimination), racial beliefs related to one's self-concept (e.g., racial identity), and explicit race-based messages (e.g., racial socialization) aid in Black adolescents' racialized view of the world. It is also through this *racialized lens* that Black adolescents perceive and make meaning of racialized experiences (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Anyiwo et al., 2018; Sellers et al., 1998). In my dissertation studies I examine how racial context (i.e., racial socialization, racial identity, racial discrimination) shapes Black adolescents' awareness of racism and perceptions of discrimination. Study 1 reports on the directional associations between cultural assets (i.e., racial socialization, racial identity) and racism awareness. In the second study of this dissertation, I evaluate the intrarelationships among critical aspects of Black adolescents' racialized lens (racial socialization, racial identity, and racial discrimination) and examine the influence of racism awareness on these relationships.

## Awareness of Racism in Early Adolescence

Adolescence (ages 10–18) is a period where forming identities and understanding of self are critical stage tasks (Erikson, 1968; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). Furthermore, Black adolescents have a unique task of constructing their identities as they are becoming more aware of racism and its impact on their life (Comer, 1995; Scottham et al., 2008). Research on awareness of social inequality, such as racism, has focused on the developmental periods of childhood (Brown & Bigler, 2005; McKown, 2004) and late adolescence (ages 15–18; Aldana et al., 2012; Bañales et al., 2019; Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Seider et al., 2017). More research is needed during early adolescence (ages 10–14; middle school years), as it is a time of school and developmental transitions. Early adolescence is a critical period to investigate Black adolescents' understanding of race and racism.

Experience of and exposure to racially discriminatory acts may be particularly impactful as cognitive abilities increase during adolescence (Steinberg, 2005), which may increase adolescents' ability to understand the complexities of race and racism. For example, results from interviews with children ages 6 to 10 from multiple ethnic groups revealed that older children's definition of racism was more elaborate than those of younger children (McKown, 2004). Black children, at every age, reported more elaborated definitions of racism than children from other racial groups (McKown, 2004), which suggests that Black children could develop complex understandings of racism more quickly than their peers at later developmental stages.

Early adolescence is characterized by significant changes in adolescents' social environments as they transition from elementary to middle school (Wigfield et al., 2006). Middle school serves as the bridge between elementary and high school (i.e., Grades 6–8). For many early adolescents, the transition to middle school disrupts previously established relationships

with peers and teachers (Simmons et al., 1987), which necessitate the construction of new relationship within a new environment. Race-based experiences during middle school may be uniquely impactful as early adolescents are navigating these new social environments and trying to make sense of these experiences as it relates to their identities and social positions. In addition to establishing new relationships and navigating a new environment, Black adolescents are more likely than their peers to experience unfair treatment from peers and teachers because of their race (Bottiani et al., 2016; Coker et al., 2009). These negative race-based experiences, within a new environment, may prompt Black youth to seek out support from trusted peers and adults to make sense of the racial experiences. In the context of these changes, it is important to investigate the factors that shape Black youth's understanding of systemic barriers and negative race-based interpersonal exchanges. Black adolescents continue to show resilience to the harmful effects of racism, as evidenced by continued positive youth development and academic persistence (Butler-Barnes et al., 2012; Evans et al., 2012; Gaylord-Harden et al., 2012; Thomas et al., 2009). Black adolescents' resilience to racism could be attributed to adolescents 1) not internalizing these experiences and 2) understanding the systemic and historical underpinnings of racism. Research has found that systemic and historical perspectives of oppression has serve as a motivating factor for Black student engagement and achievement in schools (Seider et al., 2017).

**Racialized Lens: Racial Socialization, Racial Identity, and Racial Discrimination**

A racialized lens refers to the race-based cognitions and experiences that shape Black adolescents' worldviews. Racial socialization and racial identity are considered cultural assets because they are protective in the presence of risks and promotive of positive youth development (Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Tynes et al., 2012; Yip et al., 2019). In addition to being cultural assets, racial identity and racial socialization are critical aspects of the racialized

lens that influences how Black adolescents understand the world as racialized and interrogate systems of oppression (Anyiwo et al., 2018). Race-based experiences, such as racial discrimination, are also critical to the racialized lens given that these experiences prompt youth to reevaluate previously held race-based beliefs about themselves and the world (Cross, 1980). The next few sections describe how the cultural assets of racial socialization and racial identity shape and are shaped by racism awareness. I also discuss how racism awareness may influence the link between these cultural assets and racial discrimination.

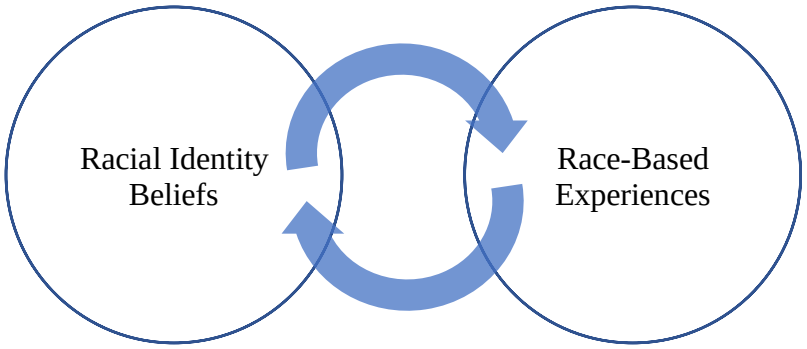
***Bidirectionality: Cultural Assets and Racism Awareness***

Racial socialization, or messages about the meaning of and the process of navigating Blackness, is a cultural asset for Black adolescents. Racial socialization is a common parenting practice for Black families (Boykin & Toms, 1985), as exposure to racism is a common experience for their Black children (García Coll et al., 1996; Lanier et al., 2017; Paradies, 2006; Seaton et al., 2008; Tynes et al., 2008; Tynes et al., 2019). Racial identity, which is defined as beliefs and attitudes around the meaning of being Black (Sellers et al., 1998), is particularly important during adolescence—a period where construction of self is an essential developmental task (Erikson, 1968).

Theory suggest that racial socialization serve as racial teachings that improve Black youth's ability to decode, interpret, and appraise racially stressful events, including racial discrimination (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Stevenson, 2014). Racial socialization is a bidirectional process whereby parent and their children co-construct spaces and opportunities to discuss race and race-related incidents (Hughes et al., 2006). As such, Black youth's awareness of racism may prompt them to initiate conversations with parents about race and racism by asking questions or sharing their race-related experiences. Racial socialization messages, then,

may influence and be influenced by racism awareness. Similarly, identity theorists suggest a feedback loop between race-based social experiences and racial identity, such that race-based experiences (e.g., racial discrimination, racism awareness) shape racial identity beliefs and racial identity beliefs shape perceptions of social interactions (Cross, 1991; Neville & Cross, 2017). Figure 1.1 illustrates this theorized feedback loop.

Figure 1.1 Model of the Race-Based Experience and Racial Identity Feedback Loop




## Racial Discrimination, Cultural Assets, and Racism Awareness

### *Racial Discrimination*

Developmental models posit racial discrimination as a normative experience for Black adolescents (Clark et al., 1999; García Coll et al., 1996; Spencer et al., 1997). In fact, in a study with middle and high school African American students, 96% of respondents reported experiencing at least one racial discriminatory event in the past year (Smalls et al., 2007). Within the school context, 60% of Black youth reported experiencing racial discrimination from their teachers or peers (Dotterer et al., 2009), which has been linked negative social, psychological, and academic outcomes (for review, see Rivas-Drake et al., 2014).

Racial discrimination—or interpersonal racism—is just one kind of racism Black adolescents can recognize and name. Research on racism during adolescence has focused mainly on the experience of interpersonal racism without consideration for the cognitive processes that underpin perceptions of racial discrimination (Fisher et al., 2000; Richardson et al., 2015; Sellers et al., 2006). More work is needed to understand the cognitive process related to perceived discrimination and adolescents' awareness of other forms of racism. For example, Black adolescents can recognize and connect systemic issues, such as teacher lay-offs leading to large class sizes, to adverse learning experiences (Hope et al., 2015). Examining how Black adolescents' awareness of systemic racism evolves may offer insights into the development of their critical consciousness, which is the process of learning about and combating social inequities. Furthermore, investigating how Black adolescents' awareness of systemic racism influences the associations between cultural assets and perceived school-based racial discrimination may demonstrate how systemic and interpersonal racism intersect. For example, a systemic level understanding of racism may inform Black adolescents understanding of personal slights within cross-race interpersonal exchanges. In addition, understanding the interplay between awareness of systemic racism and racial discrimination within the school context can highlight how Black adolescents navigate racialized contexts and may encourage educators to have explicit discussions about racism that examine Black adolescents' race-related experiences.

### *The Cultural Assets and Racial Discrimination Link*

Within my dissertation, cultural assets are defined as cultural strengths that protect against risk and promote positive youth development. Specifically, I focus on two of the most discussed and researched cultural assets for Black adolescents: racial socialization and racial identity. Research shows direct associations between cultural assets and racial discrimination

among Black adolescents. Specifically, results have shown a positive association between specific racial socialization messages and perceived racial discrimination (Burt et al., 2017; Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Neblett et al., 2006; Saleem & Lambert, 2016; Seaton et al., 2012). For example, Seaton and colleagues (2012) assessed five distinct dimensions of parental racial socialization and found positive correlations between three racial socialization dimensions (racial pride, racial barriers, and behavioral messages) and frequency of discrimination. There were no statistically significant correlations between frequency of racial discrimination and egalitarian messages or self-worth messages (Seaton et al., 2012).

Research has also found a positive link between specific racial identity dimensions and racial discrimination (Leath et al., 2019; Seaton et al., 2009; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Yip, 2018). Leath and colleagues (2019) examined two dimensions of racial identity: racial centrality, the extent to which race is central to one's self concept, and racial public regard, one's thoughts regarding how others feel about their racial group. Results revealed a positive correlation between racial centrality and racial discrimination from peers and teachers; additionally, public regard was inversely related to racial discrimination from teachers (Leath et al., 2019). Taken together, research suggests that racial discrimination is positively associated with specific dimensions racial socialization and racial identity.

Other race-related constructs may influence the cultural assets and racial discrimination link. Researchers and theory have suggested that the cultural assets and racial discrimination link is a result of an increase in racial sensitivity (Anyiwo et al., 2018; Hoggard et al., 2017), such that youth who receive more messages about race and who have more centralized and realistic views about the racial world may be more sensitive to racial cues within a discriminatory event. This, in turn, leads to higher reports of racial discrimination compared to their counterparts.

More awareness of systemic racism should add to Black adolescents' racial sensitivity; therefore, increasing the association between cultural assets (racial identity and racial socialization) and perceived racial discrimination.

## Race and Racism

### *Individual and Interpersonal Racism*

*Individual racism* includes bias and prejudice beliefs that lie *within* a person about marginalized groups (Lawrence & Keleher, 2004). Research shows that Black children become aware of individual levels of racism (e.g., others' prejudices) by age 6, and this awareness increases with age (McKown & Weinstein, 2003). Awareness of others' prejudices (e.g., negative thoughts and feelings) supports Black adolescents' perceptions of other forms of racism, such as interpersonal racism (Brown & Bigler, 2005).

*Interpersonal racism* (e.g., racial discrimination) occurs *between* people and refers to the unfair treatment of someone because of their race (Fiske, 1998; Lawrence & Keleher, 2004). Research shows that racial discrimination experiences are not uncommon occurrences for Black adolescents (Lanier et al., 2017; Paradies, 2006; Seaton et al., 2008; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Tynes et al., 2008) and are associated with critical adolescent developmental tasks, such as identity development (Hall & Carter, 2006; Seaton, 2009; Seaton et al., 2009). Perceived racial discrimination signals an awareness of individual racism (e.g., prejudices and biases within a person). Simply put, one must be aware of the perpetuator's racial biases (e.g., individual racism) and social cues within a particular event to perceive racial discrimination. Much of the research that examines racism in adolescence focuses on experiences of interpersonal racism (Lanier et al., 2017; Seaton et al., 2008; Tynes et al., 2008). Less is known about Black adolescents' awareness of other forms of racism. For example, critical race theory in education posits that

racism is embedded in educational institutions and creates educational disparities between White and Black students (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). However, little research examines Black adolescents' awareness of systemic level racial inequalities within the education context.

### *Systemic Racism*

*Systemic racism* refers to "discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and inequitable opportunities and impacts, based on race, produced and perpetuated by institutions […]" (Lawrence & Keleher, 2004, p. 1). Adolescents are directly exposed to systemic racism in the schools they attend (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Inequity and racism within education include biased curriculum and assessment, culturally-insensitive instruction, and inequitable school funding (Ladson-Billings, 1998). It is through an understanding other forms of racism, such as individual and interpersonal racism, that a person can better understand the systemic nature of racism (Brown & Bigler, 2005). Anyiwo and colleagues (2018) suggest Black adolescents may develop an awareness of social inequality (e.g., institutional racism) through direct or vicarious experiences of racial discrimination, such that experiences of racial discrimination serve as an informational exchange that teaches adolescents about a specific form of racism.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) detail the pervasiveness of racism in education, namely the maintenance of White privilege and Black subordination through discriminatory policies and inequities in school resources. Systems of power and privilege are reproduced in schools, thus perpetuating educational inequities between Black students and their White peers (Lynn & Parker, 2006). A persisting educational inequity between Black and White students is the racial performance gap, which refers to academic performance disparities like White students outperforming Black students in high school completion and on standardized test scores

(Bohrnstedt et al., 2015). For example, the 2017 National Assessment of Education Progress demonstrated performance gaps between Black and White students in reading and mathematics for students in Grades 4, 8, and 12 such that Black students had lower scores in all subjects across all grades when compared with their White counterparts (McFarland et al., 2019). My dissertation does not assess racial achievement gaps directly; however, I examine Black adolescents' understanding of the systemic causes of the Black-White performance gap. Black adolescents engage with and are exposed to varying manifestations of racism in schools. As such, schools are an ideal context to explore Black adolescents' race-based experiences and understanding of systemic oppression.

**Dissertation Studies**

The central analytical theme in both of the dissertation studies is to unpack Black adolescents' understanding of systemic level attributions to the racial performance gap between Black and White students. Situating the examination of Black adolescents' understanding of racism within the school context is important because school—including relationships with peers and teachers, and exposure to information—is a primary context that shapes adolescents' development (for a review, see Eccles & Roeser, 2011) and has been found to be critical in shaping adolescents' awareness of racial oppression (El-Amin et al., 2017; Seider et al., 2017). Racism awareness is conceptualized in the dissertation as an awareness of systemic factors related to the Black-White performance gap.

In Study 1, I investigated the bidirectional relationships between cultural assets (racial identity, racial socialization) and awareness of racism, in Grades 6 and 8, to address the question: Do racial socialization and racial identity lead to awareness of racism or does awareness of racism lead to racial socialization and racial identity? I hypothesized that awareness of racism,

racial socialization, and racial identity will have interdependent relationships over time. This is an important line of inquiry because to date there has not been an empirical examination of how the two most research cultural assets influence and are influenced by awareness of racism.

In the Study 2, I examined the intervening properties of awareness of racism on the relationship between cultural assets and perceptions of racial discrimination. Study 2 address the research question: Do the association between cultural assets and racial discrimination look different at different levels of racism awareness? I hypothesized that the effects of racial socialization and racial identity on perceived racial discrimination are moderated by awareness of racism, such that awareness of racism will intensify the association between cultural assets and racial discrimination. Understanding how Black adolescents' systemic-level awareness of racism in schools come together with their perceptions of unfair treatment can offer insights about the duality of a developing race consciousness and understanding of self.

The application of this work for mental health practitioners and educators is two-fold. First, understanding how cultural assets shape and are shaped by awareness of racism can guide practitioners and educators in developing culturally responsive strategies to combat the negative effects of systemic racism in the educational context. These culturally responsive strategies, for example, can include (a) engaging parents in discussions around race, (b) reducing the extent to which Black adolescents internalize discrimination and racism, and (c) empowering Black adolescents to advocate for educational equity. Second, understanding Black adolescents' awareness of distinct forms of racism within and across systems may serve as a tool for practitioners, educators, and parents to identify "starting" points for conversations with their Black youth. If practitioners, educators, and parents can assess youth's cognitive understanding of racism, they can tailor their approach when facilitating difficult conversations

about race and racism. Ginwright (2006) states, "[a]n important aspect of youth development and civic participation, we have found, is building a collective sense of racial identity and political consciousness about how structural racism shapes the everyday lives of young African Americans" (p. 41). By implementing culturally responsive strategies and facilitating race-related conversations, mental health practitioners, educators, and parents actively build Black adolescents' capacity to successfully navigate the racism they will likely encounter in school and beyond.

**Structure of Dissertation**

The structure of the dissertation will follow that of the traditional five-chapter dissertation. As such, I began Chapter 1 with an introduction to my dissertation and the literature that supports the research questions for the two studies that I have conducted. Chapter 2 includes an in-depth review of the literature. Specifically, I discuss the theoretical frameworks used to guide the operationalization of study constructs and development of the research questions and hypotheses. Following the discussion of the guiding frameworks, I discuss the study constructs—racial socialization, racial identity, racial discrimination, and racism awareness—and their relevance to the research questions. In Chapter 3, I present the methods used and analytical strategy for Study 1 and Study 2. I present the results from both studies in Chapter 4. Finally, I conclude the dissertation with an interpretation of the results, limitations of the dissertation studies, recommendations for future research, and considerations for practice and policy in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I situate the dissertation within the developmental period of adolescence and the schooling context. Next, I draw on the existing literature to highlight the connection between racial socialization, racial identity, racial discrimination, and racism awareness. I then discuss the theoretical grounding that guides my conceptual framing of racism awareness for Black youth during early adolescence (see Appendix A). I also conceptualize perceptions of racial discrimination as a specific form of racism awareness and discuss how an awareness of systemic racism moderates the relationship between cultural assets and perceived racial discrimination (see Appendix B). I conclude with a summary of the literature and a brief overview of the research questions that guided the dissertation studies.

### Adolescent Development

Although there are varying conceptions about when adolescence begins and ends, a generally accepted conception is that this developmental stage takes place between childhood and adulthood (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). The period of adolescence is a maturational period of cognitive, social, and physical changes (Litt, 1995; Keating, 1990). Cognitively, adolescence is a time where youth show an increase in abstract thinking and advanced reasoning compared to previous developmental stages (Keating, 1990). For marginalized youth, advanced cognitive processes may create unique opportunities for adolescents to critically reflect on their social contexts, such as interpersonal experiences and social positions. For Black adolescents specifically, this reflection may result in an increased understanding of what it means to be Black, including its beauty and the oppressive structures that limits its flourishing.

Also, compared to earlier developmental stages, adolescents are exploring their social contexts more independently, spending increased time in school and extra-curricular activities, separated from parents, and interacting with peers and adults outside of the home. Social cognitive changes may relate to youths' ability to recognize and understand experiences and cues related to discrimination – subtle and overt, direct and indirect – in ways that may relate to experiencing more discrimination in later adolescence relative to earlier childhood stages (e.g., Brown, & Bigler, 2005; Greene et al., 2006). Because youth have more independence to explore their social contexts and spend less time with their parents, they may be more likely than to younger youth to (a) have interactions with familial and non-familial others and (b) experience negative encounters with others, such as bullying, harassment, and stereotype-based interactions. Adolescence also aligns with increased racial cleavage in peer groups compared to earlier childhood, which may increase the likelihood of racially discriminatory events. For example, Black adolescents perceived more discrimination from adults and peers over the high school years (Greene et al., 2006).

Finally, adolescents are developing physically in ways that may lead to changes in contextual responses from others (Goff et al., 2014; Litt, 1995). Physical changes during adolescence may have particularly important implications for how Black youth are viewed and responded to relative to younger children (i.e., more likely to be viewed like adult, bigger racial threat). Goff and collegues (2014) conducted four experimental studies to evalute individuals' perception of child-like (innocence) attributes across gender and race. Participants rated Black children as less innocent and older compared to White children (Goff et al., 2014). Thus, adolescence is a critical and appropriate developmental period to evaluate racial identity,

including how it develops and changes, given the cognitive, social, and physical changes unique to this developmental period.

**Racism Awareness**

While there are overlapping terms to describe critical reflection on social systems (e.g., critical analysis, critical reflection), I will use the term *racism awareness* to refer to the critical analysis of systems as racially inequitable, biased, and discriminatory. Awareness of racism is distinct from awareness of other forms of oppression (e.g., sexism, classism) because race significantly influences how a person views and is viewed by society (Clark et al., 1999; Cross, 1980; García Coll et al., 1996). Brown and Bigler (2005) suggest that people who belong to stigmatized social groups (e.g., Black adolescents, girls) are likely to perceive discrimination more frequently than people who occupy more privileged social positions (Whites, boys). Research shows that Black children are more advanced in their understanding of racism compared to White children (McKown & Weinstein, 2003). Similarly, in an examination of Mexican American youth ages 6 through 18, results revealed five levels of ethnic perspective-taking or understanding of ethnicity. Levels of understanding began at having an awareness of physical attributes of ethnicity and progressed to an understanding of the social complexities of ethnicity, such as discrimination and racial stigma (Quintana, 1994; Quintana, 1998).

Although no similar undertaking has been conducted with Black youth, it can be inferred from this work and that of many others that youth's understanding of race and racism as a social phenomenon is developmental (Brown & Bigler, 2005, García-Coll et al., 1996; Quintana, 1994). As such, the investigation of Black adolescents' critical consciousness or their ability to interrogate and combat systems of oppression is warranted and may especially benefit from focusing on discrete periods of cognitive maturation to examine their critical consciousness

during adolescence. The few studies that have investigated adolescents understanding of racial oppression have found that awareness of racism was influenced by age (McKown, 2004), schooling practices (Seider et al., 2017), and parental racial socialization (Bañales et al., 2019).

It is important to examine the antecedents to distinct forms of critical consciousness, such as racism awareness. The majority of the research on critical consciousness with adolescents has focused on an understanding of broad aspects of social inequality without a focused analysis of distinct forms of social inequality, such as racism (e.g., Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer et al., 2006; Diemer & Li, 2011; Thomas et al., 2014). This is surprising given the salience of race in the lives of youth of color (Clark et al., 1999; García Coll et al., 1996; Spencer et al., 1997). I address the gap in the literature by examining Black adolescent's awareness of systemic issues related to the Black-White performance gap.

While there is no research that explicitly examines the direct associations between cultural assets and awareness of systemic racism, I reviewed literature that focuses on race-based social cognitions and interpersonal racial discrimination to understand how awareness of racism may function in the lives of Black adolescents. Research shows that those who believe that others feel negatively (e.g., racial prejudice) about Black people reported greater expectations for racial discrimination (Rowley et al., 2008) and reported perceiving more racial discrimination (Lee & Ahn, 2013; Sellers et al., 2003; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). It is important to note that public regard is distinct from awareness of systemic racism, such that public regard refers to the extent to which Black adolescents are aware of individual-level prejudices (e.g., others negative thoughts and feelings; Brown & Bigler, 2005), and does not include an understanding of systemic oppression. Nonetheless, the aforementioned studies suggest that an awareness of out-group biases towards Black people facilitates discrimination experiences such that the more

aware Black adolescents are of individual and systemic racism, the more likely they are to name interpersonal racism or racial discrimination adequately. This dissertation examines Black adolescents' cultural assets and awareness of systemic racism in a critical context where they spend much of their time: school.

**Adolescents' Awareness of Racial Inequities in Schools**

Schools are a critical context where adolescents engage with and learn from multiple actors within the school setting—peers, teachers, administrators. Because schools serve as a microcosm of the world, where racism is sustained and reinforced through cultural norms and institutional practice, micro and macro level barriers ultimately affect educational outcomes for Black students. A resulting inequity of racial barriers in the education system is the Black-White performance gap (Anderson, 2004; Kurtz-Costes, et al., 2014; Merolla & Jackson, 2018). The racial performance gap in the United States highlights the inequalities in educational resources between Black and White students that results in disparities in educational outcomes between these groups. Black students are less likely to graduate from high school, more likely to be expelled or suspended, and are less likely to attend college compared to their White K-12 peers (Darling-Hammond, 2000; United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014; American Psychological Association, 2012).

Merolla and Jackson's (2018) review paper of a decade of research that evaluates the Black-White performance gap revealed four major factors that contribute to the Black-White performance gap: (1) socioeconomic status (income, educational attainment, occupation), (2) family cultural resource, (3) school quality and racial composition, and (4) bias and discrimination in schools. Research with Black adolescents have shown that these youth are exposed to and make meaning of systemic inequities that are present in schools. For example,

Black adolescents were able to identify school quality as a barrier to their education. Hope and Bañales (2019) conducted semi-structured interviews with Black early adolescents to examine critical consciousness across community and school contexts. Results showed that some Black adolescents were able to understand the multiplicative effects of systemic issues that lead to educational inequities. One student discussed how teacher lay-offs, an economic issue, lead to issues in the classroom (e.g., too many students in one class) that negatively impacted classroom learning experiences (Hope & Bañales, 2019). This study provides evidence that during early adolescence, Black students identify and articulate connections between systemic issues that lead to negative school experiences.

Another study examined Black adolescents' understanding of "systematic oppression" in schools and the influence of race on oppression present in schools (Hope et al., 2015). Consistent with Merolla and Jackson (2018), participants reported experiencing bias and discrimination is school. Specifically, participants reported experiencing overt (e.g., in-class discipline) and covert (e.g., lower expectations for Black students) racial discrimination from schoolteachers or staff. These youth also identified racially-biased curricula that lacked topics related to race and culture (Hope et al., 2015). Bañales and colleagues (2019) examined Black adolescents' understanding of structural-level and individual-level factors related to the Black-White achievement gap. Structural-level and individual-level factors were defined as "blaming systemic racism" and "blaming Black people," respectively (Bañales et al., 2019, p. 403). Results showed that the participants' awareness of structural racism increased from 10th to 12th grade; but individual-level factors did not change (Bañales et al., 2019). In sum, research suggests that Black adolescents are aware of systemic racism and are able to articulate the ways systemic factors negatively influence their educational experiences. More research is needed to understand the

factors that shape racism awareness during early adolescence. Specifically, there is a need for a more in-depth analysis of how cultural assets, such as racial socialization and racial identity, influence awareness of racism and vice versa. Understanding the process in which Black adolescents contextualize their race-based experiences may help to explicate the process of how Black adolescents are motivated to engage in political action to combat racism.

## Directionality Explored: Racial Socialization and Racial Identity

Racial socialization and racial identity have been held in the literature as cultural assets that are critical to Black adolescents' development (Hughes et al., 2006; Miller & MacIntosh, 1999; Neblett et al., 2012; Sellers et al. 1998) as they navigate a world where racism is pervasive and embedded in systems they encounter daily (e.g., education systems; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The messages Black adolescents receive about race (racial socialization) and their attitudes about race (racial identity) may directly influence the extent to which they are aware of and understand racism (Anyiwo et al., 2018; Carter, 2008).

### *Racial Socialization and Racism Awareness*

The messages and teachings Black adolescents receive from their parents about race may have implications for how they perceive and make sense of the world (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Anyiwo et al., 2018; Bañales et al., 2019). Racial socialization from parents may serve as a resource youth can draw upon to increase their ability to interrogate systems as racially discriminatory. Anderson and Stevenson (2019) conceptualize racial socialization as a competency and racial literacy tool that adolescents and their parents draw on to respond to and learn from discriminatory racial encounters. Racial socialization messages that caution Black adolescents about the negative racial interactions they may encounter (e.g., preparation for bias) and emphasize pride in being Black (e.g., racial pride) are associated with greater awareness of

systemic racism (Bañales et al., 2019; Harris-Britt et al., 2007). Taken together, parental racial socialization practices likely play an integral role in the ways that Black adolescents come into an awareness of racism.

**Rationale for Bidirectionality**. While there are studies and conceptual framings that suggest racial socialization messages may directly influence Black adolescents' understanding of racism, less is known about the reciprocal relationship between socialization and racism awareness during early adolescence. In other words, does racism awareness influence the racial socialization messages Black adolescents are receiving, or do racial socialization messages influence racism awareness? Research and theory suggest that parental racial socialization is a bidirectional and reciprocal process whereby both parent and child influence the content of racial conversations (Hughes et al., 2006). Findings from a research study that assessed the directionality of the association between racial socialization and awareness of racism found that parental higher racial socialization at 10th grade was related to higher levels of systemic racism awareness in 12th grade, compared to participants who received lower racial socialization (Bañales et al., 2019). It is important to note that Bañales et al. (2019) did not explore the bi-directionality of the associations between racial socialization and racism awareness. Both research and theory suggest a directional association between racial socialization and racism awareness, whereby racial socialization messages lead to adolescents' awareness of racism. There has not been a study to date that has examined the bi-directional association between racial socialization and racism awareness.

### *Racial Identity and Racism Awareness*

The Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) posits that racial identity is multidimensional and includes racial centrality, racial regard, and racial ideologies (Sellers et al.,

1998). Racial centrality refers to the extent to which race is an important aspect of how someone identifies themselves. Racial regard refers to the affect that one has about one's racial group (private regard) and beliefs about how out-group members view one's racial group (public regard). Lastly, from the MMRI framework, racial ideologies refer to attitudes that one has about how Black people should behave and engage with the world (Sellers et al., 1998). Research with African American adults shows that adults with higher racial centrality beliefs report more perceived racial discrimination than those with lower racial centrality (Sellers & Shelton, 2003). In addition, African American young adults who believe that others view their racial group positively (e.g., high public regard) tend to report less racial discrimination (Sellers et al., 2003).

Previous research has also examined the relationship between racial identity and awareness of racism with samples of children and adolescents. Rowley et al. (2008) examined how internal cognitions about race (racial socialization and racial identity) and social cues influence Black children's discrimination expectations. The results showed that increases in racial centrality were related to increases in expectations of discrimination. Results also indicated an inverse relationship between public regard and expectations for racial discrimination such that higher public regard was related to lower levels of discrimination expectations (Rowley et al., 2008). Black adolescents' racial identity informs the extent to which they understand systemic racism, another form of racial discrimination. Carter (2008) interviewed Black high school students to examine their racism awareness, racial identity, and academic attitudes. The results revealed that students for whom race was a central part of their identity (e.g., high racial centrality), the importance of race for them was connected to their understanding of and connection to African Americans' history of oppression (e.g., slavery) and perseverance (e.g., civil rights era; Carter, 2008). Past research has also found no associations, specifically

bivariate correlations, between racial private regard and racial discrimination (Seaton et al., 2013).

**Rationale for Bidirectionality**. Awareness of racism is a necessary component of Black adolescents' racial identity (Cross, 1980, 1991; Neville & Cross, 2017). Stated in another way, exposure to racism informs the ways that Black adolescents understand their worlds and themselves as racialized. The Nigresecence model of racial identity (Cross, 1980, 1991) is a five-stage model of racial identity development for Black people. The Nigrescence model of racial identity development attends to racism awareness and racial identity, suggesting a reciprocal relationship between awareness of oppression and attitudes about race that relate to one's identity. For example, at the encounter stage, a person has an experience or multiple experiences through which they become aware of racism and its impact on their life—by interrogating systems of oppression. Before the encounter stage, a person is considered to be in the pre-encounter stage, the first stage of identity development as outlined by Cross (1980), where the person is not aware of their race or its implication (e.g., racism). In sum, theoretical models of racial identity suggest a reciprocal process between racial identity and awareness of racism (e.g., Cross, 1980; MMRI, Sellers et al., 1998). More empirical work is needed to examine this reciprocal process among Black adolescents.

Researchers have examined the directional associations between racial identity (centrality, public regard, and private regard) and racial discrimination among Black adolescents across three time points (Seaton et al., 2009). Utilizing cross-lagged panel analysis, the results revealed no cross-lagged (e.g., directional) associations between racial centrality and racial discrimination. Only one directional association was found for older adolescents between racial private regard and racial discrimination, such that racial discrimination at Time

2 negatively predicted private regard at Time 3. Finally, for the total sample, racial discrimination experiences at Time 1 and Time 2 lead to lower public regard at Time 2 and Time 3, respectively. Additionally, public regard at Time 2 predicted lower racial discrimination at Time 3, suggesting a bidirectional association between racial public regard and racial discrimination. Another study evaluated the directionality of the association between two dimensions of ethnic identity, exploration and belonging, and perceived ethnic discrimination among Latinx adolescents across Grades nine, 10, and 11 (Meca et al., 2020). The results revealed that higher levels of ethnic discrimination were associated with more exploration a year later, but exploration did not predict ethnic discrimination a year later. The results suggest that experiencing racial discrimination lead to adolescents exploring the meaning of their ethnicity. Similarly, perceptions of ethnic discrimination did not predict participants' belonging, but participants who reported high levels of belonging reported more ethnic discrimination a year later. Taken together, research and theory suggest unidirectional and bidirectional associations between identity and discrimination.

**Intervening Role of Racism Awareness on Cultural Assets and Racial Discrimination**

Exposure to racially discriminatory events is a normative experience for Black youth (Clark et al., 1999; García Coll et al., 1996; Spencer et al., 1997; Tynes et al., 2012). Research shows that racial discrimination experiences lead to poor psychological well-being, depressive symptomology, perceived stress, weakened school attachment, and low self-esteem (Neblett, 2019; Seaton, 2009; Sellers et al., 2006; Unnever et al., 2016). As a normative and harmful experience, Black adolescents must learn to navigate these events, especially as they become more aware of the permeance of racism across contexts (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Research shows that by early adolescence, Black youth are aware of others' racist stereotypes

and prejudices (McKown, 2004). Awareness of prejudices and stereotypes has been linked to performance anxiety (e.g., poor test-taking due to stereotype threat; Steele & Aronson, 1995) and higher expectations for racial discrimination experiences (Rowley et al., 2008).

### *Direct Links: Racial Socialization and Racial Discrimination*

As an intentional reaction to the structures of racism, Black families impart on their children teachings about the functions of race in America (e.g., parental racial socialization; Spencer, 1983). Racial socialization can include multiple types of messaging about racial barriers, racial pride, and cultural information. Racial barriers and racial pride messages have been studied most frequently. *Racial barriers* messages refer to the potential barriers that adolescents may face because of their race (Hughes & Chen, 1997). *Racial pride* messages emphasize positive attitudes and feelings towards the Black community (Hughes & Chen, 1997). Recent research found a differential influence of racial socialization for girls and boys on personal and institutional discrimination—operationalized as youth's perceptions of institutional racism that affected African American communities (Saleem & Lambert, 2016). For girls, results revealed positive correlations between cultural pride and racial barriers messages and perceptions of personal racial discrimination. For boys, cultural pride messages were negatively related to perceptions of institutional discrimination. The results suggest that dimensions of racial socialization functions differently for girls and boys on perceptions of personal and institutional racial discrimination (Saleem & Lambert, 2016). Racial socialization appears to have a direct effect on racial discrimination (Brown & Tylka, 2011; Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Neblett et al., 2006); however, there are no studies to date that examine factors that explicates the association between racial socialization and perceived racial discrimination.

### *Direct Links: Racial Identity and Racial Discrimination*

Another consequence of structural racism is the normative developmental task of understanding how race fits into Black adolescents' self-concept (e.g., racial identity). Research shows differential associations between distinct dimensions of racial identity and racial discrimination. For example, Hoggard et al. (2017) investigated the association between racial cues in a lab-based racially discriminatory event and racial public regard among African American college students. In all scenarios, the first person to arrive to the study (the participant) was to be selected to enter a raffle. However, the person who arrived last (a confederate) was selected. Participants were randomly selected to one of three racial cues group: no race cue (last participant to arrive was also African American and no explanation was given why the first to arrive was not selected), ambiguous race cue (last participant to arrive was White and no explanation given for selection), blatant race cue (last participant to arrive was White and the first participant's race was explicitly named for the reason they were not selected). The researcher (a confederate) who made the selection was White in all three racial cue conditions.

The results revealed a significant interaction between racial public regard and racial cues such that African American college students with low public regard were more likely to assume race played a role in the lab-based unfair treatment in both the ambiguous and blatant race cue conditions. In other words, for individuals in situations where race was explicitly named as the reason for unfair treatment, those who believed that others feel positively towards Black people (e.g., high public regard) were less likely to believe that race played a role than those with low public regard (Hoggard et al., 2017). This experimental study shows that racial public regard did influence the way Black college students evaluated a discriminatory event. Other research has also found an inverse relationship between racial public regard and perceived racial

discrimination (Leath et al., 2019; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009; Seaton et al., 2009; Sellers & Shelton, 2003).

The findings for the associations between racial centrality and racial discrimination has been mixed, within and across studies. Some studies have found a positive bi-variate correlation between racial centrality and racial discrimination (Burrow & Ong, 2010; Seaton et al., 2009; Seaton et al., 2014; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Sellers et al., 2006). For example, Sellers et al. (2006) found a positive association between racial centrality and racial discrimination among Black adolescents. Similarly, Seaton et al. (2014) found that school-based discrimination was associated with higher levels of centrality for Black adolescents. Burrow and Ong (2010) did not find an association between racial centrality and exposure to daily racial discrimination revealed. Seaton et al. (2009), longitudinal examination of the association between racial identity and racial discrimination demonstrated mixed results, such that racial identity was positively associated with racial identity at one time point, but not the other two time points.

**Racial Socialization, Racial Identity and the Intervening Role of Racism Awareness**

Research suggests that racial socialization and racial identity may directly influence expectations for racial discrimination. Anyiwo and colleagues' (2018) conceptual framework describes how racial socialization and racial identity may influence one's awareness of societal inequalities and perceptions of racial discrimination. The conceptual model suggests that racial socialization messages, such as preparation for racial bias, may serve as teachings that build racial literacy (Stevenson, 2014), which may make Black adolescents aware of systemic racism. Similarly, Brown and Bigler (2005) suggested that the awareness of racial bias and knowledge of racial discrimination contribute to adolescents' ability to perceive racial discrimination. Thus,

those who received explicit messaging about racial barriers and oppression may be more likely to perceive racial discrimination.

Anyiwo and colleagues' (2018) model also posits that racial identity serves as a lens through which Black adolescents interpret social inequities and racially discriminatory events. The scholars state, "African American youth may draw on their racial identity and their experiences of racial socialization to develop a critical social analysis of oppression and engage in sociopolitical action that addresses individual and structural inequality" (Anyiwo et al., 2018, p. 167). As suggested, racial identity led to greater awareness of individual and systemic racism and, in turn, led to higher reports of racial discrimination (Anyiwo et al., 2018; Hoggard et al., 2017; Operario & Fiske, 2001; Shelton & Sellers, 2000).

In conclusion, awareness of racism may moderate the relation between cultural assets and racial discrimination, such that the associations between cultural assets and racial discrimination varies at different levels of racism awareness. Similarly, racial socialization messages may serve as teachings that build Black adolescents' racial literacy (Stevenson, 2014) from which they may be able to have a greater understanding of racism, which in turn may increase their ability to recognize and name racial discrimination. Within the context of school experiences, Black adolescents' awareness of institutional level racism may make them more aware of school-based interpersonal racism, increasing the likelihood that they report racial discrimination from peers and teachers. Plainly stated, awareness of racism may moderate the relationship between cultural assets (e.g., racial socialization, racial identity) and racial discrimination.

## Guiding Theoretical Frameworks

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was used to center the importance of race and racism in the lives of Black adolescents. Additionally, CRT guided the operationalization of racism awareness in the dissertation. In the following section I focus on three tenets of CRT that were relevant to the present studies. CRT offers a framework to analyze and interpret systems of power and oppression, and I apply this framework to discuss systemic racism present in the educational context. Next, I introduce critical consciousness as the framework that supports the operationalization of racism awareness and emphasizes the importance of marginalized groups' awareness of oppression. I use critical consciousness to situate racism awareness within a larger framework that focuses on how oppressed groups combat oppression—a critical component of racism.

In consideration of the developmental period in which my dissertation studies are situated, early adolescence, I look to the Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies for Minority Children to highlight how race and racism contextualized the development of Black youth, placing further emphasis on the importance of examining race-based constructs, such as racism awareness, racial socialization, racial identity, and racial discrimination. Lastly, I utilize the Developmental Model of Children's Perspectives of Discrimination to highlight two points. First, because racial discrimination and racism awareness are similar constructs, I posit the racial discrimination literature can be used to hypothesize associations between cultural assets and racism awareness (Study 1). Second, I posit that perceptions of racial discrimination is a cognitive process that requires an awareness of other forms of racism, a process that I assess by examining the moderating role of racism awareness on

the association between cultural assets (e.g., racial socialization, racial identity) and perceived racial discrimination (Study 2).

### *Critical Race Theory: A Guiding Framework for Understanding Race and Racism*

Critical Race Theory (CRT) informed the operationalization of *racism* in the dissertation as a multifaceted, ever-present systemic barrier that oppresses and marginalizes racial and ethnic minorities (Bell, 1995; Crenshaw, 2010; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). I will use the terms racism and systemic racism interchangeably throughout the dissertation. CRT offers a framework to understand the systemic nature of racism and how systems, such as the educational system (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), perpetuate oppressive norms that lead to racial disparities like the racial performance gap.

CRT, or the principle that race is socially constructed and lends to the pervasiveness of racism and perseverance of White supremacy, offers a lens through which we can examine the intersections of race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Consistent with this theory, Stafford and Ladner (1969) defines systemic racism as:

> [T]he operating policies, priorities, and functions of an on-going system of normative patterns which serve to subjugate, oppress, and force dependence of individuals or groups by: (1) establishing and sanctioning unequal goals, objectives, and priorities for blacks and whites, and (2) sanctioning inequality in status as well as in access to goods and services. (p. 70)

Systemic racism influences Black students' academic engagement and performance outcomes (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Since Black adolescents are in constant contact with schools, applying CRT to education contexts provides a theoretical tool to examine the influence of race and racism on Black adolescents' experiences in schools and their understanding of

racism as systemic. CRT in education consists of six tenets: permanence of racism, intersectionality, whiteness as property, critique of liberalism, interest convergence, and counter-storytelling. In the next sections I will focus on the four tenets of CRT that are most closely related to the theoretical framework used to guide the operationalization and contextualization of racism within the dissertation studies: (1) permanence of racism, (2) intersectionality, (3) whiteness as property, and (4) critique of liberalism.

**CRT Tenet 1: Permanence of Racism**. Critical race theorists emphasize the permanence and pervasiveness of racism in the United States (US). CRT research rarely includes a definition of racism. However, the resounding notion is that racism not only includes deliberate acts of mistreatment of an individual because of their race, but it also embedded structurally, politically, and economically. CRT scholars have argued that racism is normal and permanent in the US. In fact, Bell (1995) presents the concept of racial realism, which emphasizes the importance of accepting the reality that racism is permanent and permeates throughout society. This racial realism is more beneficial than holding idealistic views of a just world and moves society to make real strides to combating racism. One may wonder, how can one adopt the notion that racial hierarchies will always exist and still be empowered to fight against the injustices? CRT theories argue that it is the admission of racism that enables one to move forward to work against it—admission is not acceptance. Racism is impossible to address if it is not named and acknowledge as existing (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017).

Racism can manifest within ideologies (e.g., color-blindness) and structures (e.g., school discipline practices) within the educational context. These ideological and structural manifestations can influence teachers' expectations, discipline decisions, and intrapersonal experiences with African American students (Hope et al., 2015; Pringle et al., 2010; Skiba et al.,

2011). For example, a study that evaluated racial discrimination and perceptions of school inequality among African American students found that students experienced racial discrimination in school and recognized school inequalities across school districts (Hope et al., 2015). These experiences can have a negative impact on education and career trajectories for Black students. For researchers and practitioners who work with racially marginalized groups, it is important to consider how marginalized groups may understand the complexities of race and racism in students' lives.

**CRT Tenet 2: Intersectionality**. Intersectionality theory provides a lens to understand the complexity of oppression and the multidimensionality of experiences by considering the intersections of marginalized and subordinate positionalities (Crenshaw, 1989). CRT adopts an intersectionality lens to examine how overlapping marginalized identities influence how one experiences and engages with institutions. Intersections of race, class, and gender influence the way a student may experience an educational context. For example, DeCuir and Dixson (2004) conducted a qualitative study that assessed African American students' experiences at an elite and predominantly White high school. In their study, when an African American male student recalls being asked what sport he played by other students on his first day of school, his experiences were different from the other African American girls at the school. He expressed feeling that students were more interested in his athletic abilities than getting to know him holistically (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004), suggesting that his race *and* gender together influenced his experiences with other peers. The intersection of social identities may also lead to differences in the ways in which Black youth understand racism. As such, in the dissertation studies gender was accounted for in both set of analyses for Study 1 and Study 2.

**CRT Tenet 3: Whiteness as Property**. Property is typically thought of as a tangible object. However, legal definitions have recognized property as a right (Harris, 1993). Through this definition, we can think of whiteness as a right that gives one access to the privileges attached to this right. Harris (1993) argues that whiteness functions and operates as a property right. Whiteness is a socially constructed property that grants social, economic, and cultural privileges to those who are "holders" of this property (McIntosh, 1989). Historically, the defining of persons as free or not in the US was strictly based on race; whiteness signaled freedom and Blackness signaled enslavement (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Today, although race is not explicitly tied to freedom or bondage, structures of power and privilege can be equated to the maintenance of the privileges or rights to those "holders" of whiteness (property; Harris, 1993). Thus, whiteness—afforded to those that are racially categorized as White—is directly linked to access and rights to both tangible and intangible privileges (Harris, 1993). Because of racial hierarchies' in the US, rights of whiteness will only be fully accessible to those racially categorized or recognized as White.

Harris (1993) parallels the functions whiteness to the functional criteria of property: (1) rights of disposition, (2) rights of use and enjoyment, (3) reputation and status, and (4) the absolute right to exclude. *Rights of disposition* refer to the alienability or transferability of the property right. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) highlight how whiteness is alienable in schools: "When students are rewarded only for conformity to perceived 'white norms' or sanctioned for cultural practices (e.g., dress, speech patterns, unauthorized conceptions of knowledge), white property is being rendered alienable" (p. 59).

The next functional criteria of property, as outlined by Harris (1993), is the *rights of use and enjoyment* of the privileges attached to whiteness. In the school context, whiteness allows for

full use of the school and its resources. White students are less likely to attend schools with limited material resources and support staff compared to their Black peers (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Whiteness grants full access to the use and enjoyment of the benefits of school and quality education.

The third functional criteria of property, as outlined by Harris (1993), *reputation and status*, is attached to property such that damage of reputation is related to property damage. For example, to inadvertently label a school as non-white is connected to a lower value or reputation of that school. "Urban school" commonly refers to schools mostly attended by students of color in lower economic communities (Harris, 1993). Thus, schools attended by mostly students of color have been stigmatized. Lastly, the property functions of whiteness include *the absolute right to exclude* (Harris, 1993). Whiteness is protected by racial categorization, which often involves indicating who is not White and denying them access to the privileges of whiteness. The process of exclusion manifests within the school setting through re-segregation by tracking, advanced placement classes, and honor programs (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), ultimately excluding many Black students from these educational opportunities. This exclusion perpetuates inequities in educational outcomes for Black youth and reinforces systems of privilege and power (Donnor, 2013).

Taken together, the right to exclude protects the rights of whiteness by excluding marginalized groups from enjoying the full benefits of the education system. Maintenance of White privilege and Black subordination within systems of education perpetuates educational inequities between Black students and their White peers (Lynn & Parker, 2006). While researchers and theorists have detailed the ways in which racial oppression is maintained and

sustained in schools, more work is needed to understand the factors that shape Black adolescents' awareness of these oppressive structures.

**CRT Tenet 4: Critique of Liberalism**. CRT scholars caution against notions of color-blindness and meritocracy. Color-blindness is the ideological belief that treatment should be equal across all contexts (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). Equality is not equity. Following the notion that racism exists in the US, it would be irresponsible to apply a "one size fits all" rule to address the inequalities that exist because of racism. Meritocracy refers to placing an emphasis on individual merit and effort as the sole reason for academic outcomes and trajectories. Thus, it overemphasizes individuals' hard work as being the most critical factor in promoting their success. The issue with meritocracy is that it diminishes the structures of power and privilege that are inherent in educational systems. Thus, creating the idea that it is hard work and only hard work that determines outcomes. The achievement gap cannot be entirely explained by efforts on the part of the individual. For example, Rector-Aranda (2016) states:

> In essence, when policies aimed at providing "color-blind," equitable outcomes for all students fail to enact compensatory remedies for a long history of racial inequity and injustice and instead focus all attention on supposedly objective standards-based policies that reward a warped form of achievement and further punish failure, it is clear that uplifting the downtrodden was never really the goal. (p. 11)

**Relevance of CRT to Dissertation**. This dissertation focuses on Black adolescents' awareness of structural-level factors related to the Black-White performance gap. The performance gap between Black and White students is not merely the result of the lack of effort or ability by individual Black students, as shown in the aforementioned tenets of CRT. Instead, theory and research details how the disparities in educational outcomes and performance are a

result of systemic racism. Recent research found that Black adolescents' awareness of structural-level factors related to the Black-White performance gap increased from 10th to 12th grade; however, individual attributions (e.g., lack of ability or motivation) for the gap did not change over time (Bañales et al., 2019). This suggests that with age, Black adolescents are becoming more aware of systemic-level factors related to educational disparities between Black and White students. CRT has been used as a tool to interpret, interrogate, and explicate systemic influences on educational disparities (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; López, 2003; Sleeter, 2017; Yosso et al., 2009), yet we know less about Black adolescents' understanding of educational disparities. CRT details the systemic nature of racism and the ways in manifest in school, but research does not adequately explicate if and how Black adolescents are exposed to these manifestations of racism in schools and the subsequent meaning making process among Black adolescents. Critical consciousness theory compliments CRT by focusing on individual-level awareness of and response to unjust systems.

### *Critical Consciousness*

Where CRT emphasizes the permanence and systemic nature of racism, I employ critical consciousness theory at the level of the individual to operationalize *awareness of racism* as one's awareness of racial inequality within systems that lead to racial disparities. Furthermore, critical consciousness theory suggests that the ability to interrogate systems, known as critical reflection, is necessary for the liberation for oppressive groups (Freire, 1970). Critical reflection refers to one's analysis or interrogation of a system as oppressive (Freire, 1970; Watts et al., 2011). Thus, racism awareness is a component of critical reflection that specifically focuses on the interrogation of systems as *racially* oppressive. Black adolescents cannot combat systems of oppression without first being aware that racial inequities exist because systems of oppression

are designed to privilege one group over another. Research shows that social support (i.e., community members, parents, peers) for challenging oppressive systems is related to higher levels of critical reflection (Diemer et al., 2006). Furthermore, for Black adolescents in particular, critical reflection of inequality has been linked to higher reports of expected political action, lower levels of political efficacy, and more critical action protests (Diemer & Rapa, 2016). Research on critical consciousness provides empirical support for the antecedents (e.g., social support) of critical reflection.

Sociopolitical development, grounded in critical consciousness theory and African American history, is a sequential stage process through which a person's social awareness and action develop over time (Watts et al., 1999). Sociopolitical development theory is particularly important because it suggests that adolescents are not born with a critical awareness of racism; rather, there is a developmental process through which individuals become aware of systemic oppression by critically analyzing inequitable social systems, which leads to critical action to address oppression (Watts et al., 1999; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). The messages parents give to their children about race may influence this developmental process, such that these racial messages may increase Black adolescents' awareness of systemic oppression. Additionally, race-based cognitions, specifically racial identity beliefs, may also influence Black adolescents understanding of systemic oppression, such that certain racial identity belief may lead to increases in racism awareness.

**Relevance of Critical Consciousness to Dissertation**. Critical consciousness theory and research suggest that awareness of systemic oppression is beneficial to Black youth engaging in actions to combat systemic inequality. As such, I drew on this theory to ground the importance of understanding the antecedents of racism awareness, a critical component of critical

consciousness. While the dissertation does not evaluate how racism awareness influence critical action behaviors, it does fill the gap in the literature of understanding how Black adolescents' understanding of oppression is shaped. In Study 1 I examine how racial identity beliefs and racial socialization messages influence Black adolescents' understanding of racial oppression.

### *The Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies for Minority Children*

The Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies for Minority Children underscores how social position (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, social class), racism, and segregation coalesce to influence developmental processes directly (e.g., racial identity, racism awareness) and relevant competencies (e.g., critical thinking) of marginalized youth (García Coll et al., 1996). Black adolescents occupy a social position through which they experience racism and are frequently exposed to racially oppressive systems, such as the U.S. education system (García Coll et al., 1996; Hope et al., 2015). García Coll and colleagues (1996) introduce the concept of adaptive culture, which refers to "goals, values, and attitudes" (p. 1896) minority communities develop in response to oppressive social conditions. Black adolescents and their families draw on internal (e.g., racial identity) and external strengths (e.g., racial socialization) to respond to and navigate oppressive systems. Both racial socialization and racial identity emerge in response to a world in which racism is pervasive (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Dunbar et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2014).

**Relevance of the Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies for Minority Children to Dissertation**. The integrative model highlights how race and racism contextualize the development and experiences of racially and ethnically marginalized youth. This theory supports the rationale to assess racism awareness among Black early adolescents. In Study 2, I examine the racial contexts underpinning Black adolescents' perceptions of

discrimination. The integrative model suggests that critical thinking is a relevant competency for marginalized youth; I argue that awareness of racism is a type of competency, such that it represents a critical analysis of social systems as oppressive (e.g., critical reflection). I examine the intervening role of racism awareness on the association between cultural assets and perceived racial discrimination.

### *The Developmental Model of Children's Perspectives of Discrimination*

Black adolescents may report more racial discrimination than in previous developmental stages as a result of advances in cognitive functioning, such as abstract thinking and perspective-taking (Brown & Bigler, 2005; Hatcher et al., 1990; Quintana, 1994). The Developmental Model of Children's Perspectives of Discrimination suggests that cognitive, situational, and individual factors underlie Black adolescents' ability to perceive racial discrimination (Brown & Bigler, 2005). This developmental model was foundational to the notion that racial discrimination and racism awareness are overlapping concepts. I used the racial discrimination literature to support the development of Study 1, which assess the directionality of the associations between cultural assets and racism awareness. Additionally, I used the developmental model as a conceptual frame for Study 2, which examines the intervening role of awareness of systemic racism on the relationship between racial identity, racial socialization, and perceived discrimination.

Within this developmental model, cultural cognitions refer to an understanding of race as biological and social; social cognitions refer to an understanding of others' thoughts and feelings (Spencer, 1985). Cultural and social cognitions are fundamental to Black adolescents' perceptions of racial discrimination (Brown & Bigler, 2005; McKown & Strambler, 2009; Rowley et al., 2008). Research shows that among African American children ages 5 to 11, greater awareness of negative group stereotypes (e.g., cultural cognition) is related to increases in

attributing negative interactions between White and Black people as racially discriminatory (McKown & Strambler, 2009). Another study found that race-related social cognitions influenced Black children's expectations for racial discrimination, such that higher levels of race-related social cognitions led to greater expectations of racial discrimination (Rowley et al., 2008). Racial socialization (e.g., messages about race and racism) influence the extent to which a person understands the social aspects of race through messages about race (e.g., messages about potential racial discrimination that may be experienced; Boykin & Toms, 1985). Furthermore, racial identity (e.g., meaning and significance of race to oneself) includes a person's belief about how outside group members feel about their racial group (e.g., public regard; Sellers et al., 1998). Thus, racial identity and racial socialization should be further explored as potential factors that shape Black adolescents' awareness of systemic racism, which represents racial discrimination at the systems level (e.g., education, policy).

**Relevance of the Developmental Model of Children's Perspectives of Discrimination to Dissertation Study 1**. An individual factor that Brown and Bigler (2005) identify as supporting perceptions of discrimination is knowledge of discrimination, which may be a result of implicit and explicit messages that Black adolescents receive about race (e.g., racial socialization). Research shows that Black adolescents who receive more messages about racial barriers report more racial discrimination than adolescents with lower levels of racial barriers messages (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Messages or teachings about racial barriers are forms of racial teaching about racism, which provides Black adolescents with the language to describe interpersonal and systemic racial discrimination. Awareness of systemic racism includes an understanding of the ways that systems create and maintain inequities for marginalized racial minorities. Thus, awareness of systemic racism captures a person's knowledge of discrimination

and fits within the conceptual framing of knowledge of discrimination that Brown and Bigler (2005) proposes. Research suggest a reciprocal relationship between cultural assets and perceived racial discrimination, and Study 1 will evaluate the directionality of the associations between cultural assets and racism awareness.

**Relevance of the Developmental Model of Children's Perspectives of Discrimination**

**Dissertation Study 2**. The Developmental Model of Children's Perspectives of Discrimination suggests that individual characteristics, such as stigmatized group membership, group identity, and knowledge of discrimination, contribute to adolescents' ability to recognize racial discrimination (Brown & Bigler, 2005). Research shows that Black adolescents—a racially stigmatized group—report more racial discrimination than their White peers, who are a part of a racially privileged group (Fisher et al., 2000; Hughes et al., 2016). Group identity has been widely studied with Black adolescents by way of understanding racial identity development and its influence. In sum, perceiving an event as racially discriminatory is a cognitive process.

The developmental model provides the theoretical grounding for the connection between cognitive and individual characteristics that may influence Black adolescents' perceptions of racial discrimination. Furthermore, awareness of other forms of racism may be similarly influenced by racial socialization and racial identity. Little research has empirically tested how cognitive and individual factors may coalesce to influence Black adolescents' perceptions of racial discrimination. Cultural assets, such as racial identity and racial socialization, and racism awareness may serve as a set of racial competencies that strengthen Black adolescents' ability to perceive racial discrimination. Study 2 will test this hypothesis through moderation analysis to determine how cultural assets relate to perceived racial discrimination at different levels of

racism awareness. In the following paragraphs, I review the existing literature on the study constructs: racism awareness, racial socialization, racial identity, and racial discrimination.

**Summary**

Early adolescence is a pivotal developmental period as youth are transitioning from childhood to adolescence, for which identity formation is a crucial stage task (Erikson, 1968). A critical aspect of identity exploration is a person's awareness of race as a biological and social phenomenon (McKown, 2004; Quintana, 1994). The present study is grounded in multiple theoretical frameworks that emphasize the influence of race and racism on Black adolescents' development (e.g., Integrative Model for the Study of Developmental Competencies for Minority Children), educational experiences (e.g., Critical Race Theory), and understanding of social inequities (e.g., Critical Consciousness).

By early adolescence, Black adolescents may experience an increase in perceived racial discrimination as a result of cognitive maturation in understanding stereotypes, which supports Black adolescents' ability to perceive racial discrimination (Brown & Bigler, 2005). There is little empirical research that investigates the underlying mechanisms for racism awareness and perceptions of racial discrimination during early adolescence. The dearth of research in this area is surprising given the theoretical grounding and empirical support for the influence of age-related advances in cognitive development and race-based cognitions on awareness of interpersonal racism (García Coll et al., 1996, Mckown & Weinstein, 2003; Rowley et al., 2008; Spencer et al., 1997). My dissertation will fill this gap by assessing the antecedents of Black adolescents' racism awareness and how this awareness influence cultural assets (Study 1). Furthermore, I examine the moderating role of systemic racism awareness, on the associations

between cultural assets (e.g., racial socialization and racial identity) and racial discrimination (Study 2).

**Brief Overview of Dissertation Studies**

***Study 1***

Racism awareness is conceptualized in the current study as Black adolescents' awareness of systemic racism as influencing the Black-White achievement gap. The aim of Study 1 is to investigate the bidirectional relationships between cultural assets (racial identity and racial socialization) and racism awareness. Racial socialization messages (preparation for bias and racial pride) have been linked to increases in racism awareness (Bañales et al., 2019). However, there is no work I am aware of to date that has examined the reciprocal relationship between racial socialization and racism awareness. I hypothesize that racial socialization messages will positively influence racism awareness. Furthermore, racism awareness may influence Black adolescents' cognitions and feelings about race as it relates to their identity (racial centrality) and their beliefs about the others' feelings toward Black people (racial public regard). I hypothesize that racism awareness and racial identity will be interdependent—with both influencing the other—which is consistent with theoretical models and empirical studies of racial identity that suggest racism awareness as being interrelated with Black adolescents' racial identity (Cross, 1980; Neville & Cross, 2017; Sellers et al., 1998).

**Guiding Research Question and Hypotheses**. Study 1 seeks to answer one primary research question:

1. Is there a reciprocal relationship between cultural assets and racism awareness?
    - **H1$_a$ [Racial Identity]:** Racial centrality and racial private regard will positively predict racism awareness. Racism awareness will positively

predict racial centrality and private regard. There will also be a reciprocal inverse relationship between racial public regard and racism awareness.

- **H1$_b$ [Racial Socialization]:** Racial barriers, racial pride, and behavioral racial socialization messages will have a positive reciprocal association with racism awareness.

***Study 2***

Study 2 is guided by culturally relevant theories that emphasize and contextualize how race and racism influence Black adolescents' (a) development (e.g., integrative model), (b) educational experiences (e.g., CRT), and (c) perceptions of discrimination (e.g., developmental model of perceptions of discrimination). Perceptions of discrimination is a transactional process through which cognitive abilities influence the degree to which adolescents can identify race as an explanation for unfair treatment. Perceived discrimination is influenced by the attitudes one has about their race (e.g., racial identity), the messages they receive about race (e.g., racial socialization), and their awareness of systemic racism. It is through an awareness of systemic racism that cultural assets (e.g., racial identity, racial socialization) are related to perceived racial discrimination. The current study will evaluate the explicative nature of systemic racism awareness on the relationship between racial identity, racial socialization, and perceived racial discrimination.

**Guiding Research Questions and Hypotheses.** Study 2 seeks to answer two primary research questions:

1. Are there bidirectional associations between cultural assets and racism awareness?

    - **H1$_a$ [Racial Identity]**: There will be a positive and reciprocal association between racial centrality and racism awareness. Racial public regard will

be inversely associated to perceived racism awareness and vice versa. Private regard will not inform or be informed by racism awareness.

- **H1$_b$ [Racial Socialization]**: Drawing on research and theory, racial socialization messages will predict awareness of racism a year later.

2. Does awareness of racism moderate the association between cultural assets and perceived racial discrimination?

    - **H2**: Awareness of racism will moderate the associations between cultural assets and racial discrimination.

# Chapter 3: Method

## Study Design

The current sample was drawn from a larger longitudinal study that included adolescents, their parents, and their teachers—The Parenting and African American STEM Success Study (PAASS; PI: Stephanie J. Rowley) which focuses on African American parents' and students' racial beliefs and how these beliefs shape students' educational experiences. PAASS highlights the ways families and their children are engaging in both racial and academic conversations and how these experiences impact students' academic engagement and educational outcomes. Parents of eligible students, identified as African American/Black and in sixth grade, were sent recruitment materials that included information about the study and a consent form for their child's participation. Upon obtaining parental consent and child assent, the research team collected data by administering the online survey in person at schools or sending a survey link to participants via email. Data were collected using a cohort sequential design. The present studies utilize data from the adolescent sample.

During Year 1 of the project, sixth graders (Cohort 1) were invited to participate in the study and were invited to complete follow-up surveys in subsequent study years (through 10th grade). In Year 2, the research team recruited a new cohort of sixth graders (Cohort 2) who were also invited to complete follow-up surveys in subsequent years. The project collected data from the 2015-2016 academic year to the 2018-2019 academic year. The initial survey and follow-up surveys included similar questions. Some questions, such as the Achievement Gaps Attributions (AGA) questionnaire, was not included on the seventh-grade survey. Thus, Study 1 and 2 only

include responses from the sixth- and eighth-grade surveys. Students' Grade 6 responses served as Time 1 (T1) and Grade 8 responses served as Time 2 (T2). The 30-minute surveys were completed in a public setting, either at the adolescents' school (e.g., computer lab) or at a local setting (e.g., local library). Adolescents received $10 compensation each time they completed the annual survey.

**District Demographics**

Participants were enrolled in seven different schools across four school districts. In the current study sample, District A consisted of three elementary and middle schools. The Black student population in District A schools ranged from 52% to 68% and the percentage of students eligible for the free or reduce lunch program (FRLP) ranged from 72% to 92%. District B included one middle school where 30% of the student population was Black and 51% of students were eligible for the FRLP. District C consisted of two schools that both had a Black student population of 43% and a range of 58% to 64% FRLP eligible students. District D included one middle school with 34% Black students and 53% FRLP-eligible students.

**Participants**

The sixth-grade sample consisted of a total of 271 adolescents ($M_{age}$ = 11.11, $SD$ = 0.42), whom all self-identified as "African American/Black." The sixth-grade sample included slightly more boys ($n$ = 138, 51%) than girls ($n$ = 133; 49%). The eighth-grade sample included 196 adolescents ($M_{age}$ = 13.14, $SD$ = 0.46), whom all self-identified as "African American/Black," and consisted of more girls ($n$ = 114, 59%) than boys ($n$ = 81, 42%). In both samples (Grade 6 and 8), the majority of the students were enrolled at District A ($n_{Grade\ 6}$ =114, 42%; $n_{Grade\ 8}$ = 70, 48%) and District C ($n_{Grade\ 6}$ = 104, 38%; $n_{Grade\ 8}$ = 73, 38%) schools. Table 3.1 presents sample sizes and parent education levels for Grade 6 and 8 adolescents.

To understand the racial contexts of Black adolescents' social settings, participants were asked about the racial background of their closest friends. When asked how many of their closest friends at school were White, adolescents' responses ranged from "none" (*n* = 23, 8.5%) to "5 or more" (*n* = 114; 42%) in sixth grade and from none (*n* = 20, 10%) to 5 or more (*n* = 67, 34%) in eighth grade. When asked how many of their closest friend at school were Black, adolescents' responses ranged from none (*n* = 4; 2%) to 5 or more (*n* = 214, 79%) in sixth grade and from "1 to 2" (*n* = 16, 8%) to 5 or more (*n* = 146, 75%) in eighth grade.

Table 3.1 Study Sample Demographics across Time

| Characteristic | 6th Grade (T1; *n* = 271) | | 8th Grade (T2; *n* = 196) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | % | *n* | % |
| Gender | | | | |
| Boys | 138 | 50.9 | 114 | 41.5 |
| Girls | 133 | 49.1 | 81 | 58.5 |
| Mother's education | | | | |
| Some high school or less | 14 | 5.2 | 16 | 8.2 |
| Received high school diploma | 57 | 21.0 | 53 | 27.2 |
| Received college diploma | 22 | 8.1 | 35 | 18.0 |
| Master's degree | 41 | 15.1 | 37 | 19.0 |
| Ph.D./M.D./J.D. | 6 | 2.2 | 6 | 3.1 |
| Not sure | 128 | 47.2 | 46 | 23.6 |
| Father's education | | | | |
| Some high school or less | 14 | 5.2 | 19 | 9.7 |
| Received high school diploma | 51 | 18.8 | 55 | 28.2 |
| Received college diploma | 25 | 9.2 | 24 | 12.4 |
| Master's degree | 30 | 11.1 | 20 | 10.3 |
| Ph.D./M.D./J.D. | 4 | 1.5 | 5 | 2.6 |
| Not sure | 141 | 52.0 | 69 | 35.4 |
| District | | | | |
| District A | 114 | 42.1 | 78 | 40.2 |
| District B | 45 | 16.6 | 28 | 14.4 |
| District C | 104 | 38.4 | 73 | 37.6 |
| District D | 8 | 3.0 | 13 | 6.7 |

*Note.* T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2. Some percentage columns do not add up to 100% because of missing data.

## Measures

### *Racism Awareness*

The Achievement Gap Attribution (AGA) scale was developed by the primary investigator of PAASS (Rowley, n.d.) and included two subscales: institutional and individual. The institutional dimension was used to measure racism awareness and assesses the extent to which adolescents recognize structural barriers related to the academic achievement gap between Black and White students. Participants responded to six items using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*a lot*), where higher scores indicated greater endorsement of structural attributions for the achievement gap (e.g., "Tests are biased against Black students"). Reliability coefficients were .83 and .84 in Grades 6 and 8, respectively, indicating high internal consistency.

### *Racial Identity*

Racial identity was measured using the racial centrality, racial public regard, and racial private regard subscales of the MIBI-short (MIBI-S; Martin et al., 2005) and MIBI-Teen (MIBI-T; Scottham et al., 2008). Adolescents responded to four or five items on each subscale using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*really disagree*) to 5 (*really agree*). The racial centrality subscale captures the extent to which race is a central part of how adolescents define themselves; higher scores suggest more importance of race to one's self-concept (e.g., "Being Black is an important part of my self-image"). At Grade 6, one of the five racial centrality items ("Being Black has little to do with how I feel about myself") was removed from the scale due to low factor loading ($\beta = 0.097$, $p = .462$); the reliability did not change with the removal of the aforementioned item ($\alpha = .46$). The reliability alpha for racial centrality at Grade 8, which included all five subscale items, was .42.

The four-item racial public regard subscale measured adolescents' beliefs about how others view Black people (e.g., "Most people think that Blacks are as smart as people from other races") and higher subscale scores indicated more positive affect from whites for Black people. At Grade 6, one item ("Most people consider Blacks to be less effective than other racial or ethnic groups") was removed due to low factor loading and to improve subscale reliability (4-item scale $\alpha$ = .45; 3-item scale $\alpha$ = .50). A detailed overview of the factor loading is presented in the results section. The reliability coefficient for the public regard subscale in Grade 8 was .69, suggesting high reliability.

The five-item racial private regard subscale measured the extent to which adolescents held positive affect toward Black people (e.g., "I feel good about Black people"); higher scores indicated more positive affect. The low reliability coefficients for the centrality, public regard, and private regard subscales are not unique to the present study's sample. Other studies have also found relatively low alphas (less than .6) for racial centrality (Butler-Barnes et al., 2019; Seaton et al., 2009; Seaton et al., 2014) and racial public regard (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Rowley et al., 1998). Clark and Watson (1995) suggest that the alpha statistic is overly sensitive to number of items, such that scales with more items produces higher alphas. Thus, low reliability alphas could be a result of the small number of items used to capture each subscale. See Appendix C for a complete list of racial identity items.

***Racial Socialization***

Racial socialization was measured using subscales from the Racial Socialization Scale-teen (RSQ-t; Lesane-Brown et al., 2006). The RSQ-t contains 26 items across six domains of racial socialization messages: racial pride, racial barriers, negative, egalitarian, self-worth, and behavioral. Participants were asked how often in the past year had the received certain

messaging from parents. All items were rated on a 3-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 2 (*more than twice*). Racial pride, racial barriers, negative, and behavioral messages subscales were used in the current study. The racial pride subscale (Grade 6 $\alpha$ = .47; Grade 8 $\alpha$ =.57) consisted of four items that measured the frequency of messages that adolescents received from their parents about their heritage and positive messages about Black people (e.g., "Told you never to be ashamed of your Black features [i.e. hair texture, skin color, lip shape, etc.]"). The racial barriers subscale (Grade 6 $\alpha$ = .71; Grade 8; $\alpha$ = .76) included four items that measured the frequency of messages that adolescents received from their parents about racial inequities and relevant coping strategies (e.g., "Told you that Blacks have to work twice as hard as Whites to get ahead"). The negative messages subscale (Grade 6: $\alpha$ = .77; Grade 8: $\alpha$ =.73) captured parental messaging that included negative remarks about Black people (e.g., "Told you White businesses are more reliable than Black businesses"). The behavioral messages subscale (Grade 6: $\alpha$ = .60; Grade 8: $\alpha$ =.71) captured the behaviors parents engage in with their children related to black events (e.g., "Gone with you to organizational meetings that dealt with Black issues"). See Appendix D for a complete list of racial socialization items.

***School-Based Discrimination***

School-based discrimination was measured with the School Based Racial Discrimination Scale (Eccles et al., 2006; Wong et al., 2003). Students responded to seven discrimination items using a 5-point Likert scale to report the frequency of discrimination experiences from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*every day*) based on the following the prompt: "Now thinking about when you are at school, how often do you feel […]". Higher scores indicated higher frequency of racial discrimination experiences. Three items assessed peer discrimination, or the extent to which Black adolescents experienced racial discrimination from their peers (e.g., "That kids do not want to hang out with

you because you are Black?"). Reliability coefficients indicated high internal consistency at Grade 6 (α = .78) and Grade 8 (α = .85). Teacher discrimination was assessed with four items that captured the extent to which Black adolescents experienced racial discrimination from teachers (e.g., "Teachers think you are less smart than you really are because you are Black?"). Reliability coefficients indicated high internal consistency at Grade 6 (α = .89) and Grade 8 (α = .88). See Appendix D for a complete list of school-based discrimination items.

**Data Analysis Plan for Study 1**

I conducted a cross-lagged panel analysis using Mplus Version 8.1 software (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017), to investigate the bidirectional relationships between (a) racial socialization and racism awareness and (b) racial identity and racism awareness. Racism awareness, racial identity, and racial socialization were all modeled as latent variables. To account for missing data, I conducted all analyses using full information maximum likelihood (FIML). I used the maximum likelihood with robust errors (MLR) estimator in Mplus. First, I conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to test the how well the items measured the latent constructs. One CFA was conducted for racial socialization, racial identity, and awareness of racism. In the first step of building the cross-lagged model, I include direct links between each construct and itself at Grade 6 and Grade 8 (Racism Awareness [T1] → Racism Awareness [T2]). Next, I included the path between racism awareness and racial identity at Grade 6 and the same variables at Grade 8. The Grade 8 variables (T2) were regressed on the Grade 6 variables (T1) such that the Grade 6 constructs predicted Grade 8 constructs (see Figure 3.1). Gender, age, and school district were included in the model as covariates. I used the recommended cutoffs for ideal fit indices, which includes Root Mean Square Error of Approximation values (RMSEA) at or below .05, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) values at or above .95, Comparative Fit Index (CFI)

values at or above .95, and Standardized Root Mean Residual (SRMR) values below .06 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

**Data Analysis Plan for Study 2**

Moderation analyses were employed to examine the moderating role of racism awareness on the associations between (a) racial socialization and perceived racial discrimination and (b) racial identity and perceived racial discrimination using structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques in Mplus version 8.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017; see Figure 3.2). To account for missing data, FIML was used and an ML estimator was employed to account for the non-normality of the data. I conducted a series of moderation cross-sectional analyses at Grade 6 and Grade 8. Observed variables were used in these set of analyses due to small sample sizes. The ML estimator and bootstrapping method were utilized. A total of 28 models were estimated, 14 at each grade. Three paths were estimated: (1) racial discrimination (dependent variable) was regressed on a cultural asset (independent variable), (2) racial discrimination was regressed on racism awareness (moderator), and (3) racial discrimination was regressed on the interaction term between cultural asset and racism awareness (see Figure 3.2). If the interaction was statistically significant, simple slopes were estimated to test if the slopes were different from zero.

Figure 3.1 Cross-lagged Measurement Model

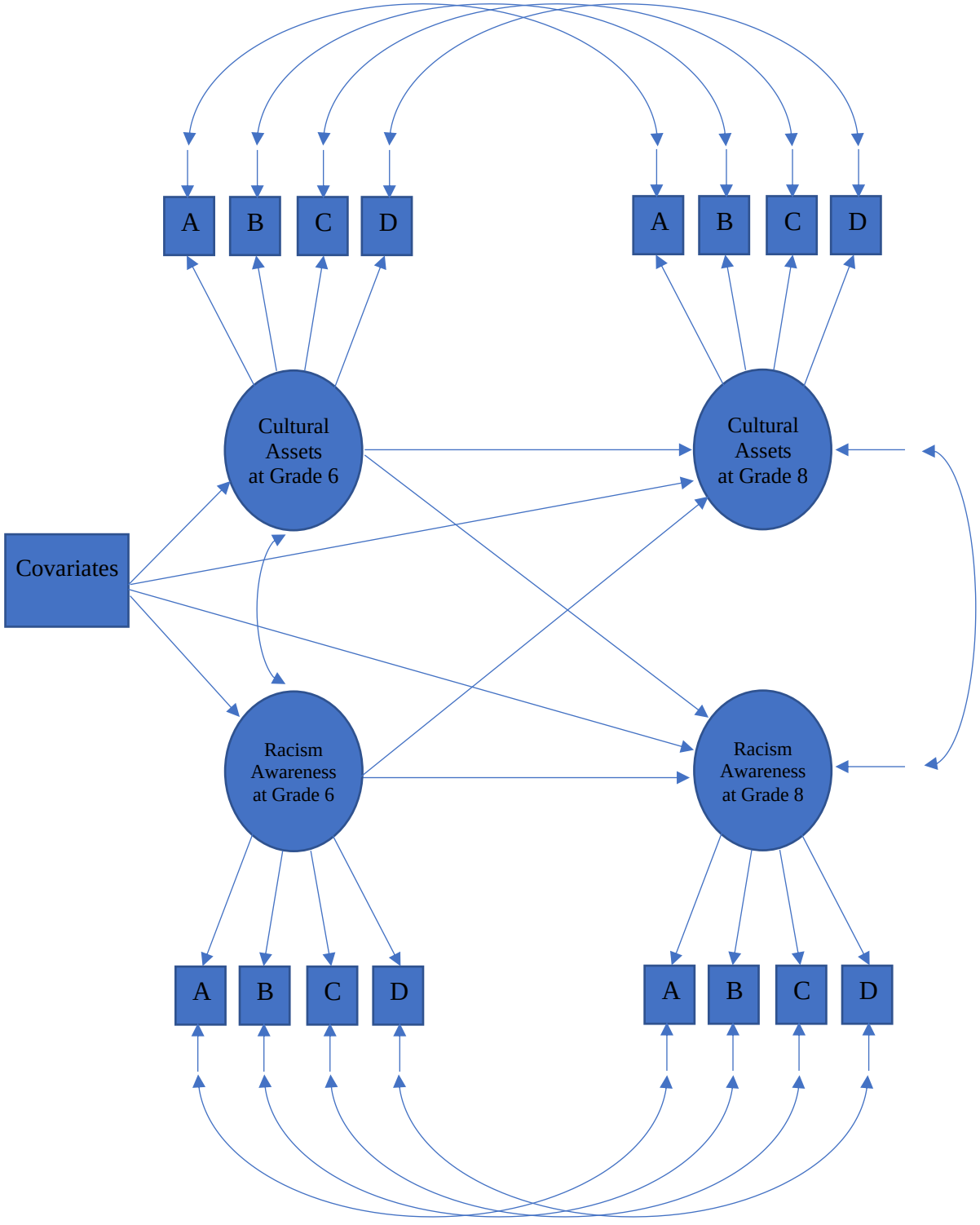
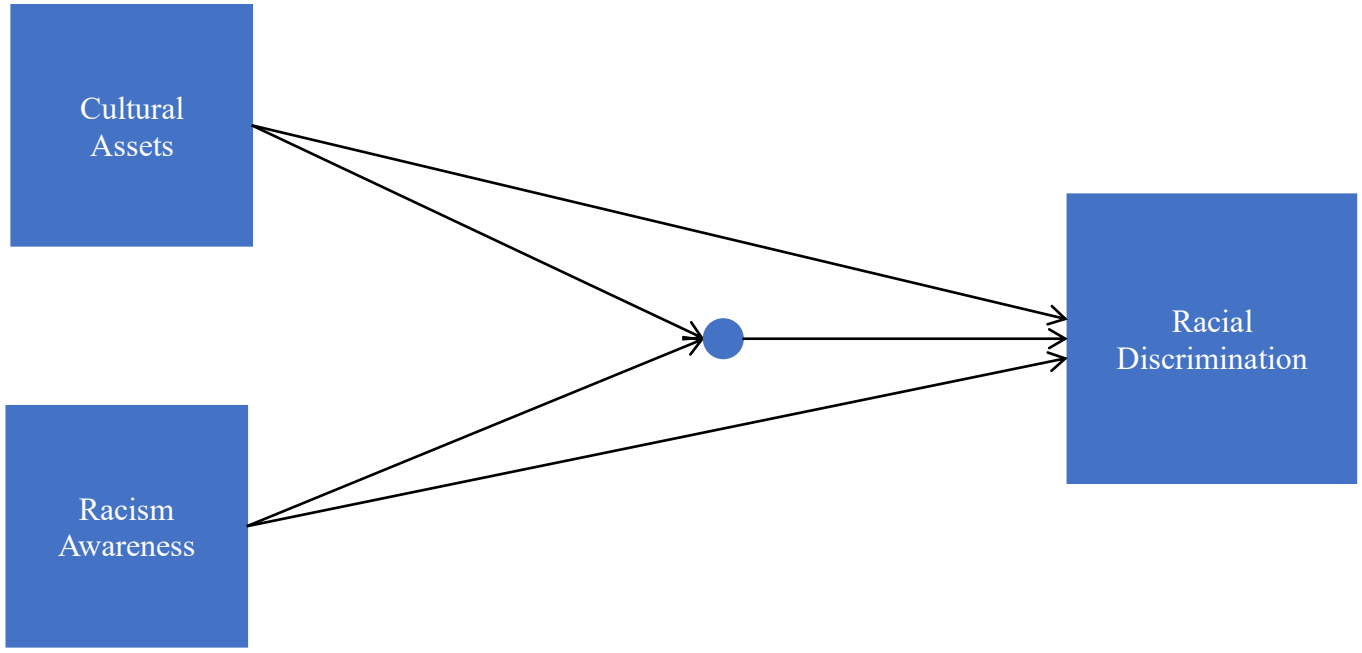


Figure 3.2 Analytical Model of Moderation Analysis



## Chapter 4: Results

### Descriptive and Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics were calculated using SPSS Version 26. Independent sample *t*-tests were conducted at each grade to examine if there were mean differences across gender and school district on the study variables. Means and standard deviations are presented in Tables 4.2 and 4.3 by grade. Results revealed that girls reported significantly lower racism awareness in Grade 6, $t(258) = -.204$, $p = .01$, and Grade 8, $t(186) = -1.73$, $p < .05$, compared to boys. Boys reported significantly more negative racial socialization messages from parents at Grade 6, $t(264) = -2.36$, $p < .001$ and Grade 8, $t(192) = -1.93$, $p < .05$, compared to girls. Boys, compared to girls, also experienced more racial discrimination from peers at Grade 6, $t(268) = -1.06$, $p < .05$. Lastly, in Grades 6 and 8, boys reported significantly more racial discrimination from teachers than girls, $t(268) = -.943$, $p < .05$, and $t(191) = -1.61$, $p < .01$, respectively. Means for significant ANOVA analyses are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Significant Gender Differences on Study Variables

| Variable | Grade 6 (T1) | | Grade 8 (T2) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys |
| | *M* (*SD*) | *M* (*SD*) | *M* (*SD*) | *M* (*SD*) |
| Racism awareness | 3.40 (1.96) | 3.45 (2.32) | 3.39 (1.89) | 3.93 (2.33) |
| Negative messages | 0.19 (0.34) | 0.32 (0.49) | 0.18 (0.29) | 0.28 (0.46) |
| Peer racial discrimination | 1.48 (0.83) | 1.60 (1.02) | | |
| Teacher racial discrimination | 1.65 (0.99) | 1.78 (1.23) | 1.66 (0.91) | 1.90 (1.17) |

*Note.* Statistically significant mean gender differences are presented. There was not a significant difference between racism awareness scores at Grade 6 and 8 for girls or boys.

Table 4.2 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations at Grade 6

| Var | *M* | *SD* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. RA | 3.42 | 2.15 | — | | | | | | | | |
| 2. CE | 3.51 | 0.76 | -.16** | — | | | | | | | |
| 3. PU | 3.47 | 0.90 | -.23** | -.02 | — | | | | | | |
| 4. PR | 4.37 | 0.61 | -.27** | .32** | .17** | — | | | | | |
| 5. RB | 0.88 | 0.58 | .36** | -.06 | -.22** | .003 | — | | | | |
| 6. RP | 1.32 | 0.47 | .12* | .13* | -.01 | .16** | .52** | — | | | |
| 7. NM | 0.26 | 0.42 | .44** | -.13* | -.12+ | -.25** | .48** | .22** | — | | |
| 8. BM | 0.86 | 0.50 | .30** | .08 | -.14 | -.02 | .45** | .50** | .42** | — | |
| 9. PD | 1.54 | 0.94 | .45** | -.06 | -.24** | -.11 | .36** | .17** | .43** | .35** | — |
| 10. TD | 1.72 | 1.12 | .50** | -.09 | -.26** | -.12* | .41** | .16** | .41** | .36** | .72** |

*Note*. Var = study variable; RA = racism awareness; CE = racial centrality; PU = racial public regard; PR = racial private regard; RB = racial barriers messages; RP = racial pride messages; NM = negative messages; BM = behavioral messages; PD = peer racial discrimination; TD = teacher racial discrimination.

+ $p$ =.05. * $p$ < .05. ** $p$ < .001.

Table 4.3 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations at Grade 8

| Var | *M* | *SD* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. RA | 3.62 | 2.10 | — | | | | | | | | |
| 2. CE | 3.50 | 0.72 | -.12 | — | | | | | | | |
| 3. PU | 3.09 | 0.98 | -.46** | -.20** | — | | | | | | |
| 4. PR | 4.53 | 0.56 | -.22** | .39** | .13 | — | | | | | |
| 5. RB | 1.13 | 0.62 | .39** | -.01 | -.38** | .07 | — | | | | |
| 6. RP | 1.45 | 0.45 | .16* | -.001 | .03 | .08 | .45** | — | | | |
| 7. NM | 0.22 | 0.37 | .34** | -.21** | -.08 | -.46** | .27** | .18* | — | | |
| 8. BM | 0.96 | 0.57 | .22** | .01 | -.11 | .03 | .51** | .61** | .22** | — | |
| 9. PD | 1.55 | 0.98 | .44** | -.11 | -.29** | -.29** | .24** | .12** | .49** | .25** | — |
| 10. TD | 1.76 | 1.03 | .50** | -.06 | -.35** | -.25** | .19** | .02** | .35** | .21** | .73** |

*Note*. Var = study variable; RA = racism awareness; CE = racial centrality; PU = racial public regard; PR = racial private regard; RB = racial barriers messages; RP = racial pride messages; NM = negative messages; BM = behavioral messages; PD = peer racial discrimination; TD = teacher racial discrimination.

* $p$ < .05. ** $p$ < .001.

Table 4.4 Bivariate Correlations of Study Variables Across Grade 6 and Grade 8

| Var | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Age$_1$ | — | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Age$_2$ | **.61**$^{**}$ | — | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. RA$_1$ | .08 | .14 | — | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. RA$_2$ | .11 | -.02 | .22 | — | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. CE$_1$ | -.10 | -.13 | **-.16**$^{**}$ | -.01 | — | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. CE$_2$ | .06 | .10 | .03 | -.12 | .21$^{+}$ | — | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. PR$_1$ | **-.17**$^{*}$ | -.14 | **-.27**$^{**}$ | -.09 | **.32**$^{**}$ | .10 | — | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8. PR$_2$ | **-.60**$^{**}$ | **-.21**$^{**}$ | **-.27**$^{**}$ | **-.22**$^{**}$ | **.25**$^{*}$ | **.39**$^{**}$ | **.47**$^{**}$ | — | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9. PU$_1$ | -.03 | -.06 | **-.25**$^{**}$ | -.22$^{+}$ | .07 | .09 | **.17**$^{**}$ | .22$^{+}$ | — | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10. PU$_2$ | -.10 | .06 | -.03 | **-.46**$^{**}$ | .05 | **.20**$^{**}$ | .10 | .13$^{+}$ | .22$^{+}$ | — | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11. RB$_1$ | .06 | .18 | **.36**$^{**}$ | **.31**$^{**}$ | -.06 | .05 | .00 | **-.28**$^{*}$ | **-.23**$^{**}$ | -.22$^{+}$ | — | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12. RB$_2$ | .06 | -.03 | .05 | **.39**$^{**}$ | .23$^{++}$ | -.01 | .05 | .07 | -.09 | **-.42**$^{**}$ | **.26**$^{*}$ | — | | | | | | | | | |
| 13. RP$_1$ | .03 | .15 | **.12**$^{*}$ | .23$^{+}$ | **.13**$^{*}$ | .13 | **.16**$^{**}$ | -.12 | .01 | -.20 | **.52**$^{**}$ | **.33**$^{**}$ | — | | | | | | | | |
| 14. RP$_2$ | -.05 | -.04 | .17 | **.16**$^{*}$ | .03 | -.01 | .16 | .08 | .00 | -.01 | .23$^{++}$ | **.45**$^{**}$ | **.26**$^{*}$ | — | | | | | | | |
| 15. NM$_1$ | **.14**$^{*}$ | **.25**$^{*}$ | **.44**$^{*}$ | **.36**$^{**}$ | **-.13**$^{*}$ | .09 | **-.25**$^{**}$ | **-.32**$^{**}$ | **-.15**$^{*}$ | .04 | **.48**$^{**}$ | -.05 | **.22**$^{**}$ | .12 | — | | | | | | |
| 65. NM$_2$ | .17 | .14$^{++}$ | .23$^{++}$ | **.34**$^{**}$ | -.10 | **-.21**$^{**}$ | **-.32**$^{**}$ | **-.46**$^{**}$ | -.18 | **-.15**$^{*}$ | .22$^{+}$ | **.27**$^{**}$ | .21$^{+}$ | **.18**$^{*}$ | **.32**$^{**}$ | — | | | | | |
| 17. BM$_1$ | .04 | .11 | **.30**$^{**}$ | .14 | .08 | .13 | -.02 | **-.24**$^{*}$ | **-.14**$^{*}$ | -.01 | **.45**$^{**}$ | .02 | **.50**$^{**}$ | .12 | **.42**$^{**}$ | **.26**$^{*}$ | — | | | | |
| 18. BM$_2$ | .00 | -.08 | .04 | **.22** | .16 | .01 | **.27**$^{*}$ | .03 | .08 | -.11 | .16 | **.51**$^{**}$ | **.26**$^{*}$ | **.61**$^{**}$ | -.06 | **.22**$^{**}$ | .12 | — | | | |
| 19. TD$_1$ | .12$^{++}$ | .12 | **.50**$^{**}$ | .17 | -.09 | .08 | **-.12**$^{*}$ | **-.36**$^{**}$ | **-.22**$^{**}$ | .02 | **.41**$^{**}$ | -.06 | **.16**$^{**}$ | .03 | **.41**$^{**}$ | .17 | **.36**$^{**}$ | -.07 | — | | |
| 20. TD$_2$ | .14 | .09 | .17 | **.50**$^{**}$ | .04 | -.06 | -.22 | **-.25**$^{**}$ | -.10 | **-.31**$^{**}$ | .10 | **.19**$^{**}$ | .20 | .02 | .08 | **.35**$^{**}$ | .05 | **.21**$^{**}$ | .02 | — | |
| 21. PD$_1$ | .03 | .03 | **.45**$^{**}$ | .12 | -.06 | .06 | -.11$^{+}$ | -.17 | **-.25**$^{**}$ | .01 | **.36**$^{**}$ | .01 | **.17**$^{**}$ | .16 | **.43**$^{**}$ | .16 | **.35**$^{**}$ | -.05 | **.72**$^{**}$ | -.04 | — |
| 22. PD$_2$ | .10 | .09 | .19 | **.44**$^{**}$ | -.13 | -.11 | -.15 | **-.29**$^{**}$ | -.18 | **-.34**$^{**}$ | .18 | **.24**$^{**}$ | .20 | .12 | .20$^{+}$ | **.49**$^{**}$ | .18 | **.25**$^{**}$ | .11 | **.74**$^{**}$ | .08 |

*Note.* $_1$ = 6th Grade; $_2$ = 8th Grade; Var = study variable; RA= racism awareness; CE = centrality; PR = private regard; PU = public regard; RB = racial barriers; RP = racial pride; NM = negative messages; BM = behavioral messages; TD = teacher discrimination; PD. = peer discrimination. Statistically significant correlations are bolded.

** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. ++ $p < .06$. + $p < .10$.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to evaluate mean differences across school districts on the study variables. Results revealed that at Grade 6, there were significant differences between schools on racism awareness, $F(3, 256) = 3.63$, $p = .014$, and negative racial socialization messages, $F(3, 262) = 5.87$, $p = .001$. Post hoc comparisons were computed using Tukey HSD test and results indicated that Black adolescents in District B—where the Black student population was 30% and 51% of students were ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 1.73$)—reported significantly less racism awareness than Black adolescents in District A—where the Black student population ranged from 52% to 68% and up to 92% students were eligible for the free or reduced lunch program ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 2.18$). Black adolescents in District C—where the Black student population was 34% and 53% of students were eligible for the free or reduced lunch program ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 2.14$)—reported significantly more racism awareness than Black adolescents from District B. Adolescents from District A ($M = 0.37$, $SD = 0.47$) reported receiving more negative racial socialization messages from parents, compared to adolescents from Districts B ($M = 0.17$, $SD = 0.32$) and C ($M = 0.15$, $SD = 0.36$). There were no differences across school districts on the study variables at Grade 8. Bivariate correlations of all study variables across Time 1 and Time 2 are presented in Table 4.4.

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

I estimated a confirmatory factor model with one factor for the racism awareness latent construct. This scale has not been used previously, thus a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was appropriate to use to test how well the items captured the latent construct of racism awareness. Correlation of variances between each variable and itself (Racism Awareness T1 → Racism Awareness T2) were included in the model to account shared sources of error variances. Model fit was evaluated using goodness-of-fit indices. The recommended thresholds of RMSEA

equal to .05 (Kline, 2010), CFI and TLI values at or above .90, and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) values at or below .08 were used (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The one factor CFA demonstrated a good fit for the measurement, $\chi 2(47) = 107$, $p < .001$ (RMSEA = .057; CFI = .943; TLI = .919; SRMR = .085). All items loaded significantly and positively onto the latent construct. Factor loadings of observed items on their latent construct and significance are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Standardized Item Loadings for Racism Awareness Latent Construct

| Indicator | Grade 6 (T1) | | Grade 8 (T2) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Estimate | S.E. | Estimate | S.E. |
| The mismatch between classroom culture and home culture for Black students. | 0.50* | 0.05 | 0.56* | 0.05 |
| Test are biased against Black students. | 0.72* | 0.05 | 0.73* | 0.05 |
| Teachers are less effective in teaching Black students. | 0.79* | 0.04 | 0.83* | 0.03 |
| Racist/biased teachers against Blacks. | 0.77* | 0.04 | 0.82* | 0.04 |
| Teachers have low expectations for Black students. | 0.82* | 0.04 | 0.87* | 0.03 |
| White have more opportunities than Blacks. | 0.73* | 0.53 | 0.69* | 0.05 |

*Note*. * $p < .001$.

**Study 1 Results: Cross-Lagged Analysis of Cultural Assets and Racism Awareness**

A total of seven cross-lagged models were estimated to test the bidirectional associations between racism awareness, racial identity, and racial socialization. Three models were estimated for racial identity: (a) racial centrality, (b) racial public regard, and (c) racial private regard. Four models were estimated for parental racial socialization: (a) racial pride messages, (b) racial barriers messages, (c) negative messages, and (d) behavioral messages. Gender, age, and school district were included in all models as covariates.

### *Racial Identity and Racism Awareness*

**Racial Centrality**. The first cross-lagged model included the latent constructs of racism awareness and racial centrality with gender, age, and school district as covariates. The cross-lagged model of racism awareness and racial centrality with covariates provided a moderate fit to the data, $\chi 2(283) = 494$, $p < .001$ (RMSEA = .043; CFI = .86; TLI = .83). The effect from racism awareness at Grade 6 to racial centrality at Grade 8 was not statistically significant (standardized estimate = -.16; SE = .15; $p = .28$). The effect from racial centrality at Grade 6 to racism awareness at Grade 8 was also not statistically significant (standardized estimate = -.06; SE = .17; $p = .75$).

**Racial Public Regard**. The second cross-lagged model included paths between racism awareness and racial public regard, $\chi 2(232) = 360$, $p < .001$ (RMSEA = .037; CFI = .92; TLI = .90). The estimate of the effect between racism awareness at Grade 6 to racial public regard at Grade 8 was not statistically significant (standardized estimate = -.05; SE = .28; $p = .14$). The effect from racial public regard at Grade 6 to racism awareness at Grade 8 was statistically significant (standardized estimate = -.36; SE = .17; $p = .03$). This suggest that racial public regard beliefs affect Black adolescents' awareness of racism.

**Racial Private Regard**. The third and last cross-lagged model of racial identity included racism awareness and racial private regard, $\chi 2(257) = 450$, $p < .001$ (RMSEA = .044; CFI = .89; TLI = .87). The estimate of the effect between racism awareness at Grade 6 to racial private regard at Grade 8 was not statistically significant (standardized estimate = -.13; SE = .10; $p = .21$). The effect from racial private regard at Grade 6 to racism awareness at Grade 8 was not statistically significant (standardized estimate = -.04; SE = .09; $p = .63$).

### *Racial Socialization and Racism Awareness*

**Racial Pride**. The first cross-lagged model examined the associations between racism awareness and racial pride messages and provided a good fit for the data, $\chi 2(257) = 373$, $p < .001$ (RMSEA = .034; CFI = .92; TLI = .90). The estimate of the effect between racism awareness at Grade 6 to racial pride at Grade 8 was not statistically significant (standardized estimate = .09; SE = .19; $p = .63$). The estimate of the effect between racial pride at Grade 6 to racism awareness at Grade 8 was not statistically significant (standardized estimate = .23; SE = .43; $p = .54$).

**Racial Barriers**. The second cross-lagged model included associations between racism awareness and racial barriers message. This model provided a good fit for the data, $\chi 2(257) = 382$, $p < .001$ (RMSEA = .035; CFI = .93; TLI = .91). The estimate of the effect between racism awareness at Grade 6 to racial barriers at Grade 8 was not statistically significant (standardized estimate = -.17; SE = .22; $p = .43$). The estimate of the effect between racial barriers at Grade 6 to racism awareness at Grade 8 was statistically significant (standardized estimate = .41; SE = .16; $p = .01$). This suggest that parental socialization messaging about racial barriers positively predicts Black adolescents' awareness of racism awareness.

**Negative Messages**. The third cross-lagged model included associations between racism awareness and negative messages, $\chi 2(306) = 417$, $p < .001$ (RMSEA = .030; CFI = .94; TLI = .92). The estimate of the effect between racism awareness at Grade 6 to negative messages at Grade 8 was not statistically significant (standardized estimate = .15; SE = .24; $p = .53$). The estimate of the effect between negative messages at Grade 6 to racism awareness at Grade 8 was not statistically significant (standardized estimate = .35; SE = .18; $p = .05$).

**Behavioral Messages**. The final cross-lagged model for racial socialization included associations between racism awareness and behavioral messages, $\chi 2(308) = 463$, $p < .001$

(RMSEA = .036; CFI = .90; TLI = .88). The estimate of the effect between racism awareness at Grade 6 to behavioral messages at Grade 8 was not statistically significant (standardized estimate = .02; SE = .22; $p$ = .92). The estimate of the effect between behavioral messages at Grade 6 to racism awareness at Grade 8 was not statistically significant (standardized estimate = .10; SE = .22; $p$ = .68).

## Study 2 Results: Awareness of Racism as a Moderator

### *Moderation Analyses*

Racism awareness was examined as a moderator of the association between cultural assets and school-based racial discrimination. I assessed the moderating effects of racism awareness using Mplus Version 8.1 software (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). Variables deviated from normality and the maximum likelihood estimator was used for all analyses due to its robustness to non-normality. A total of 28 structural equation models were estimated; 16 models at Grade 6 and 16 models at Grade 8. Due to the low sample size at Grade 6 ($n$ = 260) and Grade 8 ($n$ = 195), observed variables were used. Gender, age, and school district were included in all models as a covariates. For ease of interpretability, all variables were mean centered. All estimates can be interpreted as the effect of a variable at the mean of that variable.

**Racial Identity**. At Grades 6 and 8, results revealed no statistically significant interactions between the racial identity dimensions (centrality, public regard, and private regard) and racial discrimination from peers or teachers.

**Racial Socialization**. At Grade 6, there was a statistically significant main effect of racial barriers ($\beta$ = .245, $p$ < .001) and racism awareness ($\beta$ = .392, $p$ < .001) on racial discrimination from teachers. The interaction between racism awareness and racial barriers was also statistically significant ($\beta$ = .17, $p$ < . 01). Also, at Grade 6, the results from the moderation analyses

assessing the role of racism awareness on the association between parental behavioral messaging and racial discrimination from teachers indicated statistically significant main effects and a statistically significant interaction. At Grade 6, parental behavioral messages ($\beta = .197$, $p = .001$) and racism awareness ($\beta = .436$, $p < .001$) were also positively related to perceived racial discrimination from teachers. The interaction of racial barriers messages and racism awareness was also statistically significant and positive ($\beta = .116$, $p = .015$). Finally, at Grade 8, racism awareness did not moderate the relationship between racial socialization (racial pride, racial barriers, negative messages, and behavioral messages) and racial discrimination (peer and teacher).

Both positive interactions (racial barriers x racism awareness and behavioral messages x racism awareness) predicting teacher racial discrimination were probed by conducting a simple slope analysis in Mplus. For plotting purposes, low levels of racism awareness were calculated as one standard deviation below the mean, average levels were calculated as the mean, and high levels of racism awareness were calculated as one standard deviation above the mean. Additionally, simple slopes analyses were probed at one standard deviation below and one standard deviation above the mean. Simple slopes analysis revealed that the interaction between racial barriers and racism awareness was statistically significant at low levels ($\beta = .322$, $p = .01$) and high levels ($\beta = .593$, $p < .001$) of racism awareness (moderator). Specifically, racism awareness exacerbated or increased the positive association between racial barriers and teacher racial discrimination. As shown in Figure 4.1, the overlap of confidence bands at low levels of racial barriers (x-axis) suggests that racism awareness does not moderate the relationship between racial barriers and teacher racial discrimination at low levels of racism barriers. Thus, when the frequency of racial barriers messages is high *and* Black youth have high levels of

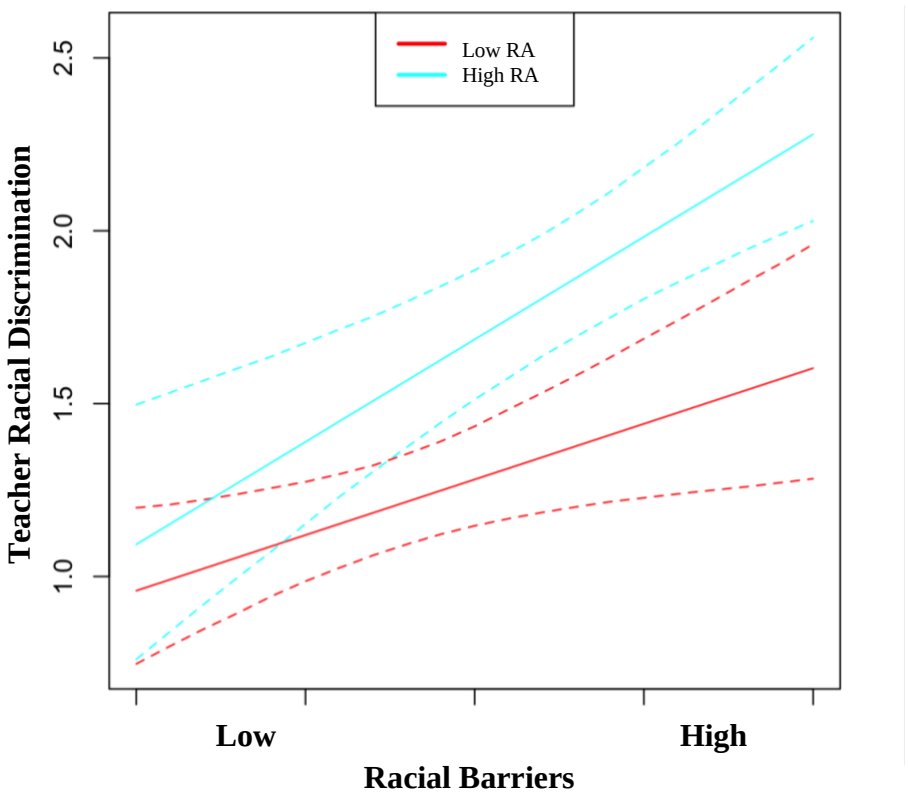
racism awareness, they perceive more racial discrimination from teachers than youth with low levels of racism awareness.

Similarly, simple slopes analyses revealed a moderating effect of racism awareness at high levels of awareness messages ($\beta = .592$, $p < .001$) but not at low levels of awareness ($\beta = .260$, $p = .07$). In other words, there was not a moderation effect of racism awareness on the association between behavioral messages and racial discrimination from teachers when racism awareness was low. However, Black adolescents with high levels of racism awareness reported low levels of racial discrimination form teachers when behavioral messages where low and more racial discrimination from teachers when frequency of behavioral messages were high.

**Overview of Main Findings**

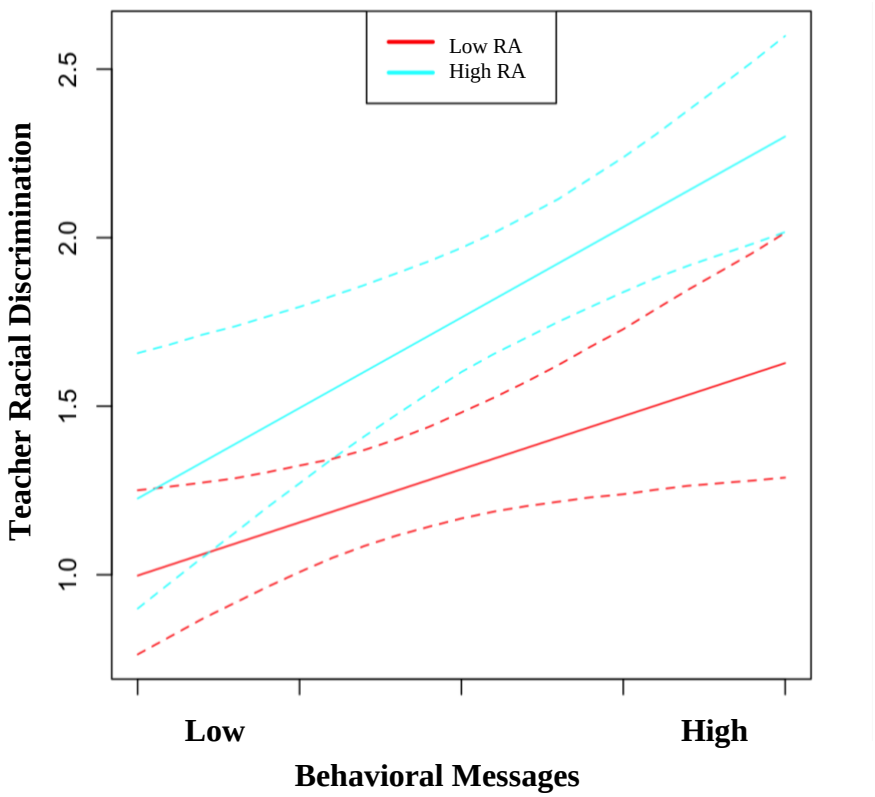
Study 1 analyses revealed that the type of racial messages parents give to their children matters. Specifically, racial barriers messages (i.e., messages about racial inequality) were associated with racism awareness. More racial barriers messages in Grade 6 lead to higher levels of racism awareness in Grade 8. Racial pride messages or behavioral messages did not lead to racism awareness, which suggest that they type of messaging matters in the context of supporting Black adolescents' understanding of systemic racism. Additionally, specific racial identity beliefs were associated with more racism awareness. Lower racial public regard or believing that others have negative feeling toward your racial group in Grade 6, lead to more racism awareness at Grade 8. Study 2 analyses showed that racism awareness moderated the association between racial socialization and racial discrimination from teachers, but not peers. Specifically, Black adolescents who receive more racial barriers and behavioral messages perceived more racial discrimination from teachers at high levels of racism awareness compared to youth who received less racial barriers messages.

Figure 4.1 Racial Barriers x Racism Awareness on Teacher Racial Discrimination




*Note.* Dotted lines represent confidence intervals for the respective colored line. RA = racism awareness.

Figure 4.2 Behavioral Messages x Racism Awareness on Teacher Racial Discrimination




*Note.* Dotted lines represent confidence intervals for the respective colored line. RA = racism awareness.

# Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter, I begin with an overview of the gaps filled by the dissertation, followed by a brief synopsis of the results from Study 1 and 2. Then I draw on existing literature to discuss and interpret the findings from Study 1 (evaluation of bidirectionality) and Study 2 (moderation of racism awareness). I also discuss how the results supported or refuted the hypotheses. Next, I discuss the limitations of the dissertation and offer suggestions for future research. Finally, I conclude with a discussion on the implications for research, practice, and policy.

## Gaps Addressed

Critical consciousness theory posits that understanding social inequities is imperative for marginalized groups to combat oppression, especially oppressive structures that directly harm their racial group. For Black youth, whose race is a central aspect of their development (García Coll et al., 1996), critical consciousness theory would suggest that understanding racism is a critical aspect for these youth to combat racism. Thus, examining the role of racism awareness in Black adolescents' development and race-based experiences is well justified. My dissertation filled the gap in the existing literature by examining how racial context (e.g., racial socialization and racial identity) shape and are shaped by racism awareness. Additionally, I investigated the intervening role of racism awareness on the association between cultural assets and perceived racial discrimination. In sum, the dissertation offers insights into how Black youth become aware of systemic racism and the mechanism that underlie perceptions of racial discrimination.

**Brief Synopsis of Results**

The purpose of my dissertation was to examine racism awareness among Black adolescents within a proximal context—schools. Thus, I assessed school-based racial discrimination and Black youth's systemic attributions for the academic performance gap between Black and White students. I operationalized adolescents' understanding of systemic inequality as racism awareness. In the first study, I examined the bidirectional relationships between cultural assets—namely racial identity and racial socialization—and racism awareness. The results revealed that racism awareness did *not* predict racial identity or racial socialization two years later. However, racial public regard in Grade 6 *negatively predicted* racism awareness in Grade 8. In other words, thinking that others held negative feelings towards Black people in Grade 6 lead to more racism awareness in Grade 8. Additionally, racial barriers messages from parents in Grade 6 *positively predicted* racism awareness in Grade 8. That is to say, more parental messages about racial inequities in Grade 6 lead to more racism awareness in Grade 8. Thus, rather than finding bidirectional relations between the racial contextual variables and racism awareness, I found unidirectional relations where the racial context seemed to lead to racism awareness.

In the second study, I examined the potential moderating role of racism awareness on the association between cultural assets and racial discrimination from peers and teachers. Racism awareness moderated some of the associations between cultural assets and racial discrimination. Specifically, racism awareness moderated the association between racial socialization (racial barriers and behavioral messages) and racial discrimination from teachers at Grade 6, such that at high levels of racism awareness, students who reported receiving more racial barriers and behavioral messages reported more perceived racial discrimination than students who received

fewer racial barriers and behavioral messages. Simply put, high levels of racial barriers and behavioral messages were associated with more perceived racial discrimination, especially when Black adolescents had high levels of racism awareness. Racism awareness did not moderate the relation between and of the racial identity dimensions and racial discrimination. In the following sections, I will discuss the results of Study 1 and Study 2 across three constructs: racial identity, racial socialization, and racism awareness.

## Study 1: Directional Associations

### *Racial Identity*

**Racial Centrality**. I hypothesized that centrality and racism awareness would have bidirectional associations, such that centrality would predict racism awareness two years later, and racism awareness would predict racial centrality two years later. The results did not support the hypothesis. Grade 6 racial centrality did not predict racism awareness at Grade 8, and Grade 6 racism awareness did not predict racial centrality at Grade 8.

Centrality refers to one's belief that race is a critical part of their identity (Sellers et al., 1998). The results revealed that there were *no* significant associations between centrality and racism awareness within the cross-lagged panel model. The findings were consistent with another study that found no cross-lagged associations between racial centrality and the frequency of racial discrimination (Seaton et al., 2009). The results from the current study did not support theory or past research that suggested a positive association between racial centrality and race-based beliefs, such as racism awareness (Anyiwo et al., 2018; Carter, 2008). Previous research with Black high school students found a positive association between centrality and understanding of the history of African American oppression (Carter, 2008).

Perhaps the inconsistency between the Carter (2008) finding and the present study finding can be attributed to the difference in study design and the developmental period. The current study used a quantitative approach to data collection with early adolescents (ages 10–14), whereas Carter (2008) used a qualitative approach with high school students (ages 15–17). While some studies have found associations between centrality and perceptions of racial discrimination (e.g., Seaton et al., 2013; Sellers et al., 2006), an awareness of systemic racism may be more complicated for early adolescents to understand because of its covertness compared to racial discrimination experiences. For example, a Black adolescent may notice that their teacher punishes them more for small infractions (e.g., excessive talking in class) compared to their White classmates. However, the adolescent may have difficulty in noticing the differential distribution of resources between a school in an improvised neighborhood that serves mostly racial and ethnic minority students compared to a school in a more affluent neighborhood that serves predominantly White students. Part of this lack of awareness could be due to a lack of exposure, but it also may be a result of cognitive limitations in understanding these systemic patterns and their meaning.

One plausible explanation for the non-statistically significant association between racial centrality and racism awareness is that centrality is not intrinsically tied to individuals' understanding of racial inequality. Neville and Cross' (2017) research on racial awakening in Black adults revealed that an understanding of racism was a part of—but not the totality of—one's racial identity. Another explanation for the current results is that awareness of racism was not related to racial centrality because while awareness is an aspect of racial identity, it is not a significant determinant of one's view of their racial self (Neville & Cross, 2017). Mean difference scores for the sample was the smallest for the racial centrality scale. The centrality

means for the dissertation sample was 3.51 in Grade 6 and 3.53 in Grade 8, suggesting that racial centrality was relatively stable over time; thus, there was little variance to be explained. Future research should take a developmental approach and assess how changes in racial identity may influence changes in racism awareness and vice versa.

**Racial Public Regard**. I hypothesized that there would be a reciprocal association between racial public regard and racism awareness. The dissertation results partially supported the hypothesis. A cross-lagged panel model revealed a significant path between racial public regard at Grade 6 to racism awareness at Grade 8. Thus, lower racial public regard beliefs in Grade 6 lead to more racism awareness in Grade 8. The path between racism awareness at Grade 6 to racial public regard at Grade 8 was not statistically significant, which suggests that racism awareness did not affect racial public regard beliefs.

Racial public regard refers to one's beliefs about how others feel, positively or negatively, about one's racial group (Sellers et al., 1998). I expected a bidirectional relationship between public regard and racism awareness such that high public regard would be related to lower racism awareness and high racism awareness would predict lower public regard two years later. I did not find a bidirectional relationship, but the results did reveal a unidirectional relationship where sixth-grade public regard predicted racism awareness two years later. Specifically, a greater belief that others view Black people negatively in Grade 6 ($M_{age}$ = 11.11) led to more awareness of racism in Grade 8 ($M_{age}$ = 13.14). This finding was consistent with previous findings.

Seaton and colleagues (2009), who assessed the bidirectional associations between racial public regard and racial discrimination, found a unidirectional negative association between Time 1 ($M_{age}$ = 13.80) racial public regard and Time 2 ($M_{age}$ = 14.80) racial

discrimination. Their results revealed a bidirectional association between Time 2 and Time 3 ($M_{age}$ = 15.80), such that high racial public regard was related to lower perceived discrimination a year later, and low racial discrimination at Time 2 led to higher levels of racial public regard at Time 3. The results in the current study were not consistent with the latter finding of bi-directionality. A clear difference in the dissertation study and the Seaton and colleagues' (2009) study is the mean age in the study samples. The consistent findings between the two studies (e.g., the unidirectional association between Time 1 and Time 2) is likely the result of similar developmental periods of Time 1 and Time 2 across both studies.

Taken together, if an individual believes that others think positively of Black people, then it is more difficult to conceive of a world in which White privilege and racial oppression exist. These results suggest that racial public regard is an antecedent to understanding systemic racism. This notion is supported by Brown and Bigler's (2005) theory that one must have knowledge of individual racism (e.g., other's negative thoughts and biases) to have the ability to perceive racial discrimination.

**Racial Private Regard**. I hypothesized that racial private regard would not predict racism awareness, and racism awareness would not predict racial private regard two years later. The results supported this hypothesis. The results suggest that racial private regard or the extent to which one feels positively about one's racial group (racial private regard) does not have any bearings on understanding systemic. Past research has also found no associations, specifically bivariate correlations, between racial private regard and racial discrimination (Seaton et al., 2013). Seaton and colleagues (2009) examined the bidirectional associations between racial identity and racial discrimination across three years, starting when the sample was around 14 years old. Researchers split the analysis into two groups: older adolescents (ages 17–

18) and younger adolescents (ages 14–16). Group analysis revealed that bidirectional associations existed between racial private regard and racial discrimination for older adolescents, but not for younger adolescents, between Time 2 and Time 3 (Seaton et al., 2009). The current study results are consistent with the results for the younger adolescents in the Seaton and colleagues' study.

Racial private regard is inward-facing, where public regard is an outward-facing belief. As such, racial private regard has been linked to more self-centered outcomes, such as self-esteem and psychological functioning. For example, Sellers et al. (1998) found that at high levels of racial centrality, private regard was positively related to self-esteem among Black adolescents and college students. I expected private regard to be associated with beliefs about the self and not with external factors related to other's behaviors, and the current study supported this notion. More work is needed across a longer developmental period to determine how these associations may persist across early, middle, and late adolescence.

***Racial Socialization***

Racial socialization is a common parenting practice for many Black families (Boykin & Toms, 1985), as exposure to racism is a common risk for their Black children (Lanier et al., 2017; Neblett et al., 2006; Paradies, 2006; Tynes et al., 2019). A recent study found a unidirectional positive association between racial socialization messages (preparation for bias and racial pride) and racism awareness between Grades 10 and 12 (Bañales et al., 2019). Theory suggests that racial socialization is a bidirectional and reciprocal process influenced by both parent and child (Hughes et al., 2006). As such, I expected a bidirectional association between parental socialization and black adolescents' awareness of racism. The following sections will

discuss the findings across each type of racial socialization messaging: racial pride, racial barriers, negative messages, and behavioral messages.

**Racial Pride**. In line with recent theoretical work (Anyiwo et al., 2018), I hypothesized that racial pride messages would lead to more awareness of racism and vice versa. The results from this dissertation revealed no bidirectional or unidirectional associations between racial pride and racism awareness, which was inconsistent with previous findings of a directional relationship where racial pride predicted racism awareness two years later (Bañales et al., 2019). The inconsistent findings could be attributed to differences in the scales the study authors used to measure racial socialization. For example, Bañales et al. (2019) combined the racial pride and racial barriers subscales, from two different scales, to capture racial socialization and found a directional association between racial socialization and racism awareness. I examined the racial pride and racial barriers subscales separately and found no statistically significant associations between racial pride and racism awareness. Assessing racial socialization using different analytic tools may have contributed to contradictory findings. Another explanation for this finding is that racial pride messaging is about the self and not about others, so it does not necessarily serve as a form of racial literacy as much as it serves as a form of empowerment. This finding is similar to the findings in the dissertation on the associations between racial centrality (significance of race to one's identity) and racism awareness and racial private regard (personal affect towards one's own racial group) and racism awareness.

**Racial Barriers**. I hypothesized that racial barriers messages and awareness of racism would have a reciprocal relationship. The hypothesis was partially supported, revealing a unidirectional association between racial barriers and racism awareness. Racial barriers messages in Grade 6 predicted racism awareness in Grade 8. Racism awareness did *not* predict racial

barriers messages two years later, which suggests that an awareness of racism did not influence the type of conversations Black adolescents had with their parents. The results suggest that even in this information age, where Black youth are being socialized online by peers and non-familial adults, parental messaging *still* has a significant effect on Black youth's racial literacy—namely their awareness of systemic racism. Specifically, parents' conversations with their children about the barriers they may face because of their race serves as a form of racial teaching for Black youth about systemic racism. Results revealed that racial barriers messages served as a form of racial literacy teaching, such that more messages about racial barriers leads to more awareness of systemic racism, which is consistent with theory that suggests that racial socialization is an iterative process and supports Black youth's racial literacy, or "the ability to read, recast, and resolve racially stressful social interactions" (Stevenson, 2014, p. 4).

The results suggest that conversations about racial barriers are not just informing how youth understand interpersonal exchanges, but they also inform Black youth about the systemic rooting of racial disparities. Parents are a significant source of socialization and support for Black youth. A study found that messages that prepare Black adolescents for negative racial encounters (e.g., racial barriers) were related to higher reports of perceiving interpersonal racism for Black adolescents compared to those who receive fewer preparation messages (Harris-Britt et al., 2007). More programming and research are needed to teach parents how to support their Black youth, especially as Black youth become increasingly aware of the meaning and functions of race and racism.

It is important to note that racial barriers messages, as measured in the current study, capture the extent to which parents tell their children about potential unfair treatment or obstacles they may face because of their race (e.g., "Blacks have to work twice as hard as Whites to get

ahead"). Racial barriers messages in this study do not include explicit messages about racial inequality within the educational context. Even more interesting, the racial barriers subscale does not explicitly include messages about systems of oppression and instead includes messages about potential interpersonal encounters with interpersonal racism. Thus, socialization about interpersonal racism seems to influence the understanding of systemic racism. I am aware of no other study to date that evaluates racism awareness and parental socialization during early adolescence. Future research should utilize qualitative methods to investigate the different sources of socialization Black adolescents draw on to make sense of their racialized world, especially their understanding of racial oppression.

**Negative and Behavioral Messages**. I hypothesized that negative racial socialization messages and racism awareness would have a reciprocal relationship. The results did not support the hypotheses. There was not a bidirectional or unidirectional association between negative messages and racism awareness. The negative messages subscale measured the frequency with which Black adolescents received messages about Black people that were disparaging or White-praising (e.g., "Told you that learning about Black history is not that important"; "Told you White businesses are more reliable than Black businesses"). In Study 1, the results did reveal a marginally statistically significant ($p$ = .054) path between negative messages at Grade 6 and racism awareness at Grade 8. Importantly, the path between negative messages and racism awareness was statistically significant before adding in gender, age, and school district, as covariates. Future work should conduct group analysis to examine if associations between these constructs are different across different groups.

I hypothesized that behavioral racial socialization messages and racism awareness would have a reciprocal relationship. The results did not support the hypotheses. Behavioral messages

did not lead to racism awareness, and racism awareness did not influence parental racial socialization. Behavioral messages included parental behaviors that exposed adolescents to Black culture and history. Because these behaviors did not support Black adolescents' understanding of racism in this dissertation, a more nuanced understanding of the type of cultural events and cultural material that parents give their children may be warranted. For example, if a parent bought their children books that emphasized racial pride, then the behavioral messages would be consistent with the results I found for racial pride messages. However, if the books and events dealt with issues in the Black community that emphasized racial inequality, then perhaps the results would have revealed a significant association between behavioral messages and racism awareness. Taken together, understanding the content of parental behavioral messages may provide insights into how adolescents apply these messages to other aspects of their lives.

***Study 1: Relevance to Theory***

Study 1 analyses revealed two cultural assets that contributed to Black adolescents' awareness of racism. Racial public regard beliefs and racial barrier messages from parents in Grade 6 were responsible for Black adolescents' understanding of racism in Grade 8. The other racial identity dimensions (centrality and private regard) and racial socialization dimensions (racial pride, negative messages, and behavioral messages) did not influence Black adolescents' understanding of racism. Interestingly, despite theoretical assumptions that racism awareness influenced racial identity beliefs and racial socialization practices, the results revealed that racism awareness did not influence Black adolescents' racial identity beliefs or the racial socialization they received from their parents.

Critical race theory (CRT) emphasis the importance of drawing on Black voices, which are often left out of research, to counter the majoritarian narratives (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017).

The dissertation studies centered Black adolescents' reports of their understanding of racism awareness, and the results revealed that Black adolescents recognize systemic oppression within school contexts. Lawrence (1995) argues, "we must learn to trust our own senses, feelings and experiences, to give them authority, even (or especially) in the face of dominant accounts of social reality that claim universality" (p. 338). Schools are spaces in which structures of power and privilege are reinforced through policies and practices that disadvantage Black students and privileges White students (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The results showed that Black adolescents are not oblivious to these practices and their racial public regard beliefs and racial barrier messages from parents shape this understanding. Unfortunately, school norms often make discussions of race taboo, which is demonstrated in educators' reluctance to and discomfort with discussing current racialized events, such as police brutality.

Some of the findings from Study 1 were inconsistent with previous findings, which could be a result of the developmental and contextual difference between the current sample of early adolescents in middle school and the previous research with late adolescents in high school. Beyond the developmental difference in cognitive abilities between middle school students and high school students, middle school students also lack experiences and exposure to racism. Thus, racial identity beliefs and conversations about race may not be directly related to their *developing* understanding of racism. Future work is needed across a larger developmental period, perhaps across early and late adolescence, to examine the links between a developing racism awareness and cultural assets.

**Study 2: Intervening Role of Racism Awareness**

Previous research on the perceptions of racial discrimination suggests that cultural assets and knowledge of discrimination are antecedents of perceptions of racial discrimination (Brown

& Bigler, 2005). As such, I hypothesized that cultural assets and awareness of systemic racism, which represents knowledge of systemic discrimination, would interact to influence perceived racial discrimination. Analytically, I expected racism awareness to moderate the cultural asset and racial discrimination link. I expected racism awareness to influence the *strength* of the association between cultural assets and racial discrimination, as suggested by Brown and Bigler's (2005) theory. In the following sections, I discuss the findings from the moderation analyses.

### *Racial Identity and Perceived Racial Discrimination*

**Racial Centrality**. I hypothesized that the association between centrality and racial discrimination would vary at different levels of racism awareness. The results did not support this hypothesis. There was not a statistically significant association between racial centrality and racial discrimination. Thus, there was not a moderation effect of racism awareness on the association between racial centrality and racial discrimination.

It was surprising not to find an association between centrality and racial discrimination because other studies have found varying forms of associations among these constructs. For example, Sellers et al. (2006) found a positive association between racial centrality and racial discrimination among Black adolescents (ages 11–17). Another study found that school-based discrimination was associated with higher levels of centrality for Black adolescents (ages 13–18; Seaton et al., 2014). The aforementioned empirical studies utilized bivariate correlations, and in the dissertation study, I use multivariate analysis with gender, age, and school districts included as covariates. Overall, racism awareness did not moderate the association between racial centrality and racial discrimination. This further emphasizes the multidimensionality of racial identity; associations between the dimensions of racial identity (e.g., centrality, public regard,

private regard) and race-related factors (e.g., racism awareness, racial discrimination) vary because each dimension of racial identity is capturing an aspect of how Black adolescents relate to and understand their race.

**Racial Public Regard**. I examined the moderating effect of racism awareness of the associations between cultural assets and racial discrimination. I hypothesized that racism awareness would moderate the association between regard and discrimination. The hypothesis was not supported. There was not a statistically significant moderating effect of racism awareness on the relation between racial public and racial discrimination. There was also no main effect of racial public regard on racial discrimination.

Public regard, a dimension of racial identity, has been held in the literature as a cultural asset because of its defense against racial discrimination (Neblett et al., 2006). Most research that examines the association between racial public regard and racial discrimination examines the buffering effect of racial public regard on the negative consequences of racial discrimination. The non-statistically significant main effect of racial public regard on racial discrimination is a surprising finding and inconsistent with previous work. In an experimental study that assessed the association between public regard and social cues in a racially discriminatory event among Black college students (ages 18–21), Hoggard et al. (2017) found a significant interaction between racial public regard and racial cues. Students with low public regard, or the belief that others though negatively of their racial group, were more likely to assume race played a role in the lab-based unfair treatment when they thought race could have played a role in unfair treatment and when race was explicitly named as the reason for unjust treatment (Hoggard et al., 2017).

The current study asked early adolescents, a much younger sample than Hoggard and colleagues' (2017) experimental study, to identify structural reasons for the Black-White achievement gap. These attributions (e.g., tests are biased against Black students) are much more covert than a lab-based racial discrimination scenario. Gender may have also played a role in the findings. Gender differences in racial identity beliefs and discrimination experiences have been well documented (Butler-Barnes et al., 2019; Carter, 2008; Chavous et al., 2008; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Leath et al., 2019; Saleem & Lambert, 2016). Butler-Barnes et al. (2019) found that school-based discrimination and public regard were inversely related for Black girls, but not for Black boys. In the current study, I included gender as a covariate but did not conduct separate analyses for boys and girls. Future work should conduct group analyses to examine differences in these associations across boys, girls, and gender non-conforming adolescents.

**Racial Private Regard**. I examined the moderating effects of racism awareness on the association between racial private regard and racial discrimination. I hypothesized that racial private regard and racial discrimination would not be associated; thus, I did not expect to find a moderating effect of racism awareness. The results supported this hypothesis. There was not a main effect of racial private regard on racial discrimination. Furthermore, the racial private regard and racism interaction term was not significant, which suggested that racism awareness did not moderate the association between racial private regard and racial discrimination.

### *Racial Socialization and Perceived Racial Discrimination*

**Racial Barriers**. The results partially supported the hypothesis that racism awareness would moderate the association between racial barriers and racial discrimination. Results revealed that awareness of racism moderated the association between racial barriers messages on perceived school-based racial discrimination in Grade 6, but not in Grade 8. The current study

shows that the effect of racial barriers messages on perceived racial discrimination is stronger (e.g., a steeper slope) among adolescents who are more aware of systemic racism than those who are less aware of systemic racism. Awareness of systemic racism within the school context strengthens the association between racial barriers messages and Black adolescents' perceptions of racial discrimination.

**Behavioral Messages**. I hypothesized that racism awareness would moderate the association between behavioral messages and racial discrimination. This hypothesis was partially supported. Results showed that racism awareness moderated the relationship between behavioral messages and racial discrimination from teachers at Grade 6, but not at Grade 8 and not for peer discrimination. Specifically, the findings suggest that the effect of behavior messages on perceived racial discrimination is stronger for Black adolescents who have higher levels of racism awareness than those with lower levels of racism awareness. Perhaps Black adolescents who are more aware of systemic racism lean on their parents to unpack their racialized experiences and parents, in response to their children's experiences, may involve them in more activities that emphasize Black culture help their children situate racial discrimination experiences in a larger context of racism.

Behavioral barriers were directly related to the extent to which Black adolescents understood systemic racism. What is it about behavioral forms of racial socialization that make it function as racial literacy building? The subscale used in the current study asked Black adolescents to report the frequency with which they received different types of behavioral racial socialization messages from their parents including: (a) "Bought you Black toys or games"; (b) "Gone with you to Black cultural events (e.g., Black cultural plays, Black cultural movies, Black cultural concerts, Black cultural museums)"; (c) "Gone with you to organizational meetings that

dealt with Black issues"; and (d) "Bought you books about Black people." Three of the four forms of behavioral socialization include conversations, either written or vocal, centered on Black culture or issues impacting the Black community. The results suggest behavioral forms of racial socialization are forms of racial literacy building. Behavioral forms of racial socialization may also introduce Black adolescents to strategies (e.g., racial justice work, academic engagement) to combat racism.

**Racial Pride and Negative Messages.** Racism awareness did not moderate the association between racial pride and racial discrimination or the association between negative messages and racial discrimination. Racial pride messages include messages that emphasize the beauty and strength of Black features and culture. Negative messages deemphasized the strength of Black people and culture. While racial pride messages and negative messages are on opposite ends of the spectrum; both types of messages functioned similarly, but likely for different reasons. Racial pride messages were not predictive of perceived racial discrimination and racism awareness did not change this association. Research suggests that racial pride messages counter the effects of racial discrimination (Neblett et al., 2006); however, the results from Study 2 shows that racial pride messages do not influence the extent to which Black adolescents' attribute unfair treatment to race. The results also revealed that negative messages do not influence Black adolescents' perceptions of racial discrimination. Perhaps negative message influences the extent to which Black adolescents internalize racism. For example, if a Black adolescent is often picked on by peers and teachers who suggest that they are not intelligent and they have parents telling them that Whites are more intelligent than Blacks, then when they experience racial discrimination, they may actually believe they are being treated in such a way

because of a personal flaw or deficit—instead of understanding that people are acting on their own biases.

***Study 2: Relevance to Theory***

Results from Study 2 revealed that racism awareness strengthened the associations between racial socialization (racial barriers and behavioral messages) and perceived racial discrimination from teachers at Grade 6. Racism awareness did not moderate the association between racial identity and racial discrimination from peers or teachers. Critical consciousness theory suggests that critical action is dependent on critical reflection (e.g., an awareness of oppression). The results showed that higher levels of racism awareness were associated with more reports of racial discrimination in the context of high reports of racial socialization. Black adolescents' contextualization of racial discrimination as being a part of a larger systemic issue may prompt them to act in more critical ways to combat racism, such as joining organizations that discuss Black issues or persisting in academic spaces as a form of resistance against racism.

The results revealed positive and significant main effects of racism awareness across all racial socialization and racial identity moderation models. Accounting for racial identity and racial socialization, racism awareness was significantly and positively related to racial discrimination from peers and teachers. Critical consciousness theory suggests that without an awareness of oppression, marginalized groups cannot work to disrupt oppressive norms and societal inequities (Freire, 1970; Watts et al., 2011). Thus, Black adolescents' awareness of racism is not only normative, but it is also an integral part of their sociopolitical development (Freire, 1970; Watts et al., 2002; Watts et al., 2011). The dissertation aimed to address this gap in the critical consciousness literature, which was to examine the factors that shape Black adolescents' race-based critical reflection. The dissertation did not set out to examine the

consequence or benefits of racism awareness; rather, the studies explicated the factors that promote awareness and the cognitive process of perceived racial discrimination. Future work should examine the benefits and consequences related to racism awareness.

**Historical Context of the Study**

The data for this dissertation were collected between 2014 and 2018. During this time, the world was inundated with stories of police brutality against Black people. In 2014, the stories of Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Eric Gardner, and Aura Rosser made national headlines. In 2015, Freddie Gray and Sandra Bland. In 2016, Alton Sterling, Philando Castille, and Korryn Gaines. In 2017, Marquis Jones. In 2018, Stephen Clark and Botham Jean. Just a year before data collection in 2013, Black Lives Matter, a collective movement towards dismantling racism, was founded after the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder of a Black male teenager, Trayvon Martin. The historical context of the racial climate in the world during the time of data collection may have heightened Black adolescents' awareness of racial inequality, which could have served as a racial awakening (Neville & Cross, 2017) or as a source of confusion about the world in which they live. More work is needed to disentangle the sources of socialization Black youth incorporate into their worldviews. Furthermore, research should examine how Black youth cope with and respond to global discussions of race and realizations of racism.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

The dissertation studies make considerable contributions to the literature on Black youth development as it relates to understanding how racial context shapes understanding and perceptions. Although there were strengths of the dissertation studies' emphasis on the school-based context, this was also a limitation of the study. Racism awareness in the dissertation captured an awareness of a specific kind of racism within a specific context. Racism awareness

was measured using the Achievement Gap Attribution (AGA; Rowley, n.d.) scale, which captured system-level factors related to the achievement gap. Although schools are an important and proximal context for adolescents, more work is needed to understand their awareness of multiple and distinct forms of racism. Future work should develop a robust measure of racism awareness that captures the multidimensionality of the constructs, namely the different levels of racism (e.g., individual, interpersonal, institutional).

In addition to psychometrics work needed to fully capture the awareness of racism, another limitation of the study was the low internal reliability of racial centrality in Grades 6 and 8, which were .46 and .42, respectively. Although other studies have found high (i.e., above .60) internal consistency (Thomas et al., 2009; Seaton et al., 2013; Sladek et al., 2020), a few reported low internal consistency (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Rowley et al., 1998). One item was removed at Grade 6 due to a low and not statistically significant factor loading. Future work should examine racial centrality during early adolescence and develop new psychometric tools or improve current psychometric tools used to examine racial centrality.

The study sample included adolescents who self-identified as "Black/African American." As a result of this criteria, students who identified as multi-racial were not included in the study. The sampling decisions may limit the generalizability of the results to other groups. Furthermore, adolescents in the sample were enrolled in elementary and middle schools that were largely comprised of Black and White students, resulting in low diversity in other ethnic and racial minority groups. Generalizing the results of the current studies should be done with caution. Future research should consider group analysis across age, gender, ethnicity, race, and school demographics to examine if the antecedents and effects of racism awareness are similar or different across groups.

Finally, I did not examine the effects of racism awareness on adolescents' mental health outcomes, which is often shown to be negatively impacted by racial discrimination (Lanier et al., 2017; Tynes et al., 2012; Seaton et al., 2008). Future work should investigate how awareness of racism may influence mental health. Awareness of the systemic nature of racism could be protective, such that a person does not internalize or take responsibility for manifestations of racism (e.g., racial discrimination, disparities) in their educational contexts. Conversely, being aware of the systemic nature and permanency of racism may serve as a risk factor to healthy development, especially if the person does not feel efficacious in combating racism. Thus, future work should examine changes in racism awareness over time and how such changes influence mental health outcomes.

**Broader Impacts: Research, Practice, and Policy**

One of the CRT tenets critiques the notions of liberalism, which includes meritocracy beliefs. The idea that a person must pull oneself up by one's bootstraps ignores the conditions that create instances where some people do not receive these metaphorical "boots." The title of this dissertation begins with "You Must Work Twice as Hard," which highlights the kinds of messages parents have to give to their Black children to prepare for a world that sustains and maintains oppressive norms. It is quite ironic that meritocratic rhetoric emphasizes the importance of work while assuming that some people do not work hard enough. Black parents understand that this rhetorical fallacy seldom applied to their children and redress this notion by telling their children that they must work twice as hard as Whites to get ahead. Unfortunately, even with the ways that Black people have broken glass ceilings, disparities still exist in institutions of education and mental health (Grinstein-Weiss et al., 2016; Marrast et al., 2016; Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016). The dissertation findings can be applied to research, practice, and

policy. In the following sections, I use the term Black youth to be inclusive of children, adolescents, and young adults. My dissertation focused on early adolescents, but the implications for research, practice, and policy can be applied more generally to Black youth.

### *Research*

Research with marginalized populations should critically examine how aspects of one's marginalized social position may impact development and outcomes. The use of culturally relevant frameworks to investigate and interpret findings related to marginalized youth's experiences provide a more accurate analysis of their experiences (García Coll et al., 1996). Specifically, it counters color-blind approaches, such that it emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and seeing one's race.

CRT aligns with social work principles because it calls for a social-justice approach from scholars, researchers, practitioners, educators, and policymakers to engage in change practices across all ecological systems (Kolivoski et al., 2014). Acknowledging the existence and prevalence of racism is the first step to addressing inequalities; however, *active* engagement in steering change must follow. How do we use what we know about structures of power and privilege that disadvantage certain groups and privileges other groups? Research must be aimed at making space for marginalized groups to be heard, seen, validated, and supported in their pursuits of liberation. The dissertation studies showed that it is not enough to only engage in quantitative approaches to research. Still, it is crucial to utilize qualitative methodologies to adequately capture Black youth's exposure to and understanding of racism. An example of research that thoughtfully engages Black youth in the research process is youth participatory action research (YPAR). YPAR projects aimed at raising critical consciousness have shown promise for its efficacy in increasing participants' understanding of and action against oppression

( Hope et al., 2015; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2016). I argue that these programs also need to include relevant coping strategies to deal with the accompanying stressors associated with a developing critical consciousness. Collaboration with mental health professionals and Black youth is imperative for improving the strategies that Black youth draw on to combat, resist, and cope with racism.

***Practice***

Understanding how awareness of racism develops for Black youth may serve as a catalyst to identify points of intervention that draw on internal and external strengths to combat the negative consequences of racism experiences. Discussions of race and racism with youth within schools and mental health settings need a multi-level approach to responding to the emotional needs of youth in contexts of increased awareness of and exposure to racism. The results from the dissertation may be used to understand the extent to which Black youth understand racism, which may inform the tools used by mental health practitioners and educators to address Black youth's experiences with discrimination. It is also important to highlight that not all Black youth who experience interpersonal racism experience adverse outcomes (i.e., they exhibit resilience). Although interpersonal racism experiences may not have a negative influence on Black youth's mental health, systemic racism does pose a risk to the healthy development of Black youth (Clark et al., 1999). Twelve grand challenges were created for the social work profession. One of the grand challenges is to "ensure healthy development for all youth." Racism is a risk for the healthy development of Black youth, and the profession of social work cannot adequately address the needs of youth of color—ensuring their healthy development—without acknowledging the influence of race and racism in their lives.

School social workers and other mental health professionals who work with Black youth must center Black youth's experiences within the therapeutic process. Centering Black youth's experiences includes: (1) engaging in difficult conversations about race, (2) teaching and practicing healthy coping strategies, (3) seeking out education on the unique ways that racial stress operates in the lives of Black youth, and (4) seeking out training on how to be effective with clients who are presenting with race-related stress and trauma. Engaging, Managing, and Bounding through Race (EMBRace; Anderson & Stevenson, 2016) is an exemplar program that promotes healing through engaging conversations about racial encounters that includes: (1) competence building about race, (2) discussion and engagement in racial coping strategies and (3) bonding through thoughtfulness and care in the discussion. EMBRace (Anderson & Stevenson) is an intervention program from Black families and their children. Still, mental health professionals could learn from such programs on how to engage in difficult racial conversations with care. Additionally, mental health professionals must check their own biases and fragility that hinders their ability to provide services to help Black youth cope with racial stress and trauma.

***Policy***

Students spend, on average, 1000 instructional hours in school per year (Hull, 2011). Schools are a critical setting to introduce programs that address the behavioral, emotional, and mental health needs of students. Schools are uniquely positioned, within adolescents' ecologies, to offer significant support to students who encounter daily and/or chronic stressors. However, systems and norms of oppression are often reproduced in schools (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). For example, Black youth experience expulsion and suspension at disproportionate rates compared to White adolescents. Black youth are three times more likely, regardless of the

severity of the infraction, to be suspended or expelled than their White peers (United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). One study reported that students who had been expelled or suspended were five times more likely to drop out of school compared to students who had not experienced suspensions or expulsions (Suh and Suh, 2007).

Policies that move beyond alternatives to school discipline (e.g., restorative justice) should be considered, specifically those that include student input. For example, schools should not only adopt policies that reduce suspension and expulsion rates for Black students, but schools should also empower Black students to speak out against the inequities present in their school systems. Finally, Black youth should be involved and consulted when implementing or changing policies that directly influence their development. For example, school policies should be informed by the stated needs of the students served. Previous work has shown that Black youth are aware of social inequities and can identify how these inequities negatively influence their educational experiences (Hope et al., 2015). Black youth are not blind consumers; they have a voice and should have a seat at the table to inform decisions.

**Conclusion**

Racial identity and teachings about race (e.g., racial socialization) have become an integral part of the Black experience in America. Parental messages are an essential component of Black adolescents' understanding of racism. Within the context of mental health, racial socialization practices can also be a form of healing for racial stress and trauma. Early adolescence is a developmental period where there is an increase in contact with peers and non-familial adults. However, even with all of the different sources and forms of socialization, parent messages are still predictive of racism awareness, which is also an integral part of the development of Black youth. Racism awareness is significantly impactful for youth who

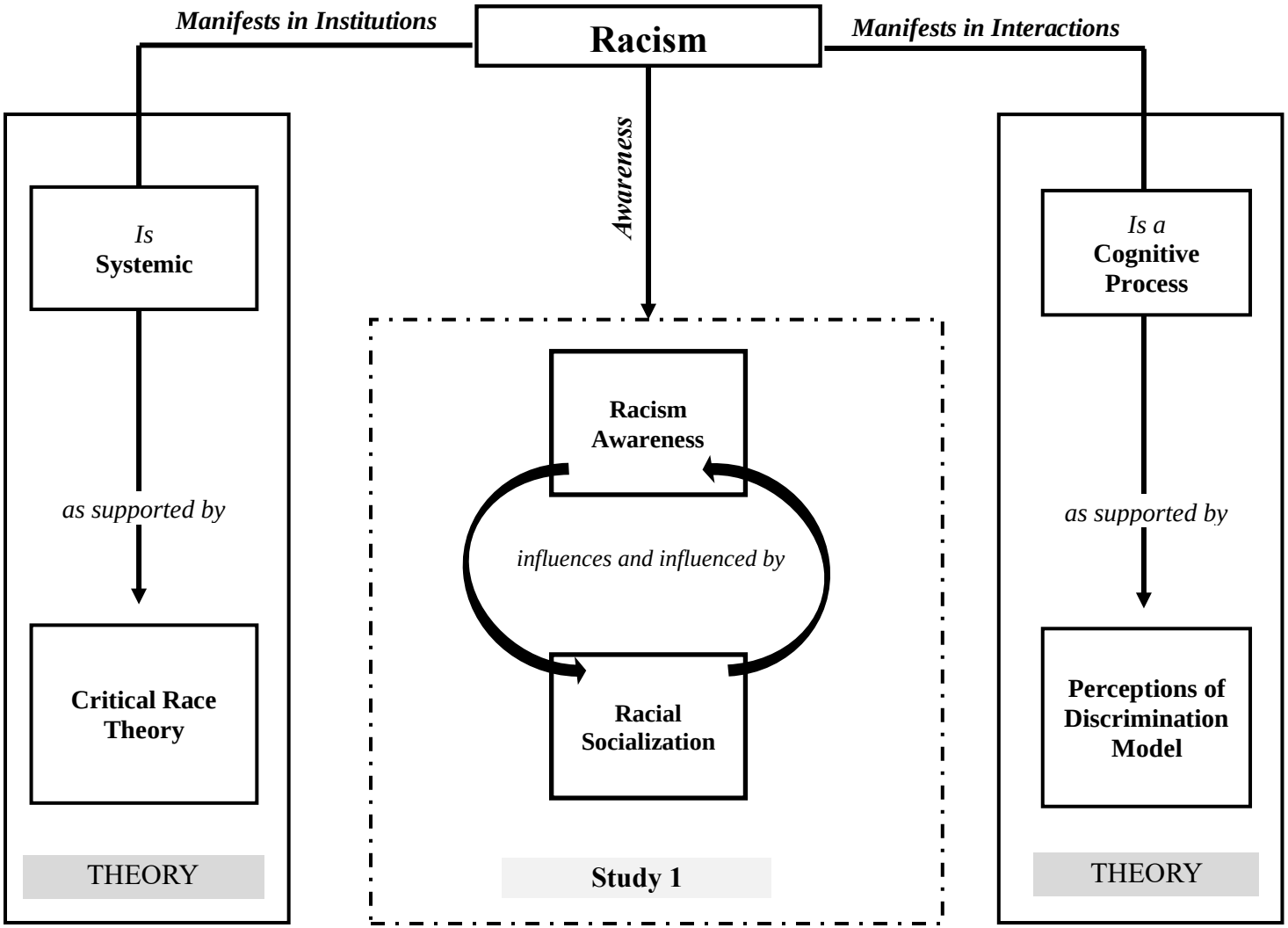
receive a high frequency of specific types of racial socialization: racial barriers messages and behavioral messages. More work is needed to (a) further explain how an understanding of racism may influence the development of and outcomes for Black adolescents, (b) understand how awareness of racism is developed, and (c) explicate the dual processes of racism awareness and racial identity development. Does racism awareness buffer the risks of racial discrimination? Is racism awareness a cultural asset?

As we are in the wake of a global pandemic that has magnified the racial disparities in the United States, understanding how Black youth are interpreting and responding to these crises is imperative, especially as it relates to how they combat and resist racial oppression. Ginwright (2015) highlights how strategies of organizing and healing have come together, amongst young Black community leaders, to "make a more complete and durable fabric in our efforts to transform oppression, and hold the power to restore a more humane, and redemptive process toward community change" (p. 36). Black youth's developing critical consciousness calls for strategies for healing to be emphasized in research, practice, and policy.

# Appendices

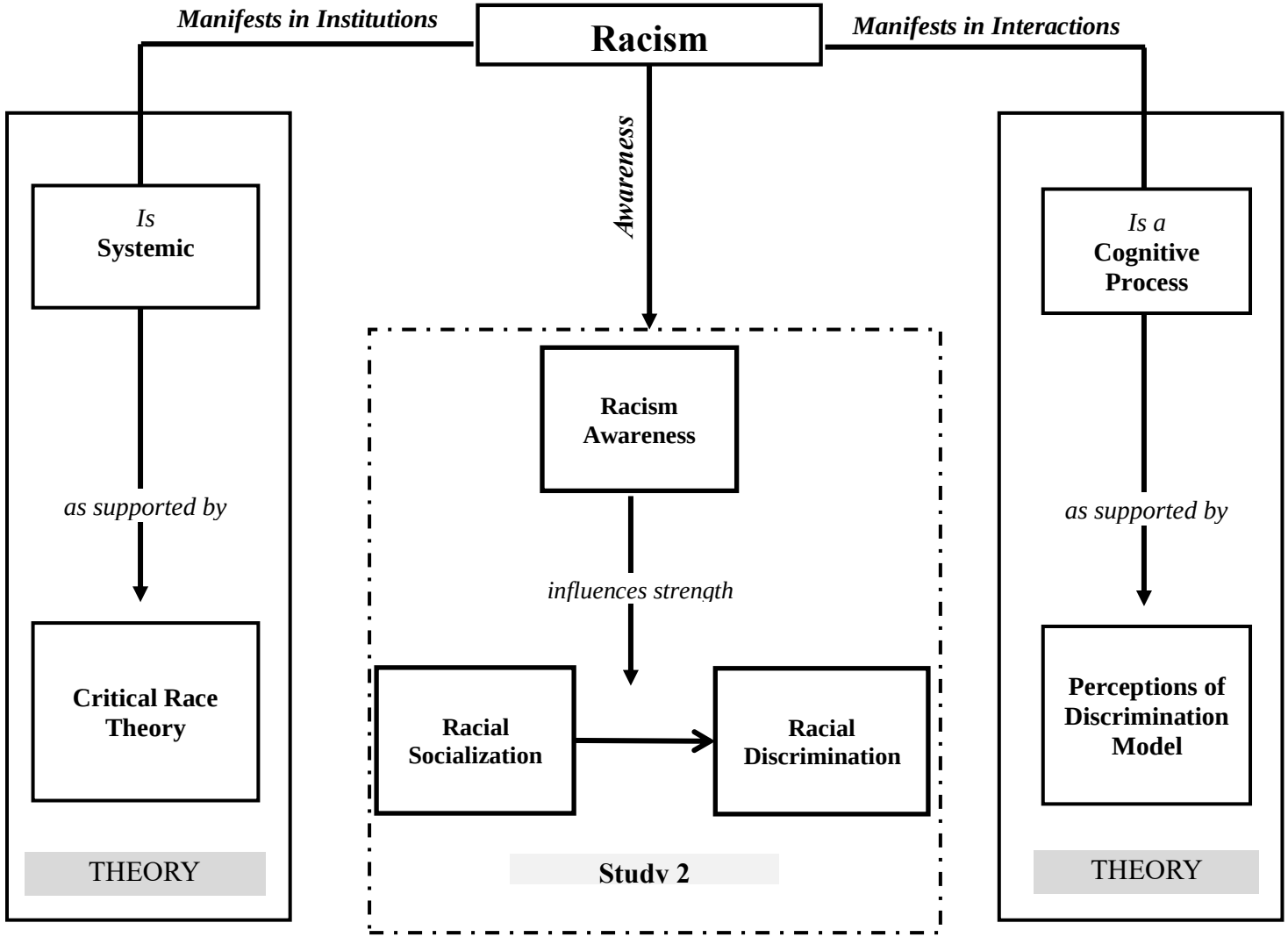
Appendix A Conceptual Model for Dissertation with Study 1 Embedded

Figure A.1Study 1 Embedded in Dissertation Conceptual Model



Appendix B Conceptual Model for Dissertation with Study 2 Embedded

Figure A.2 Study 2 Embedded in Dissertation Conceptual Model



Appendix C Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity

| Subscale | Item |
|---|---|
| Racial centrality | Being black has little to do with how I feel about myself. |
| | Being Black is an important part of my self-image. |
| | Other Blacks are a good reflection of who I am. |
| | Being Black is not important to my sense of what kind of person I am. |
| | If I could choose my race, I would choose to be some other race instead of Black. |
| Racial public regard | Others think that Black people are unworthy. |
| | Blacks are considered good by others. |
| | Others respect Black people. |
| | Most people consider Blacks to be less effective than other racial or ethnic groups. |
| Racial private regard | I am proud to be Black. |
| | I feel that my racial or ethnic group is not worthwhile. |
| | I'm glad to be Black. |
| | I regret that I'm Black. |
| | I feel good about Black people. |

Appendix D Racial Socialization Scale-teen

| Subscale | Item |
|---|---|
| Racial pride messages | Been involved in activities that focus on things important to Black people. |
| | Talked to you about Black history. |
| | Told you that you should be proud to be Black. |
| | Told you never to be ashamed of your Black features (e.g., hair texture, skin color, lip shape, etc.). |
| Racial barriers messages | Told you that some people try to keep Black people from being successful. |
| | Told you that some people think they are better than you because of their race. |
| | Told you that Blacks have to work twice as hard as Whites to get ahead. |
| | Told you that some people may dislike you because of the color of your skin. |
| Negative messages | Being black has little to do with how I feel about myself. |
| | Being Black is an important part of my self-image. |
| | Other Blacks are a good reflection of who I am. |
| | Being Black is not important to my sense of what kind of person I am. |
| | If I could choose my race, I would choose to be some other race instead of Black. |
| Behavioral messages | Bought you Black toys or games. |
| | Gone with you to Black cultural events (e.g., Black cultural plays, Black cultural movies, Black cultural concerts, Black cultural museums). |
| | Gone with you to organizational meetings that dealt with Black issues. |
| | Bought you books about Black people. |

Appendix E School Based Racial Discrimination Scale

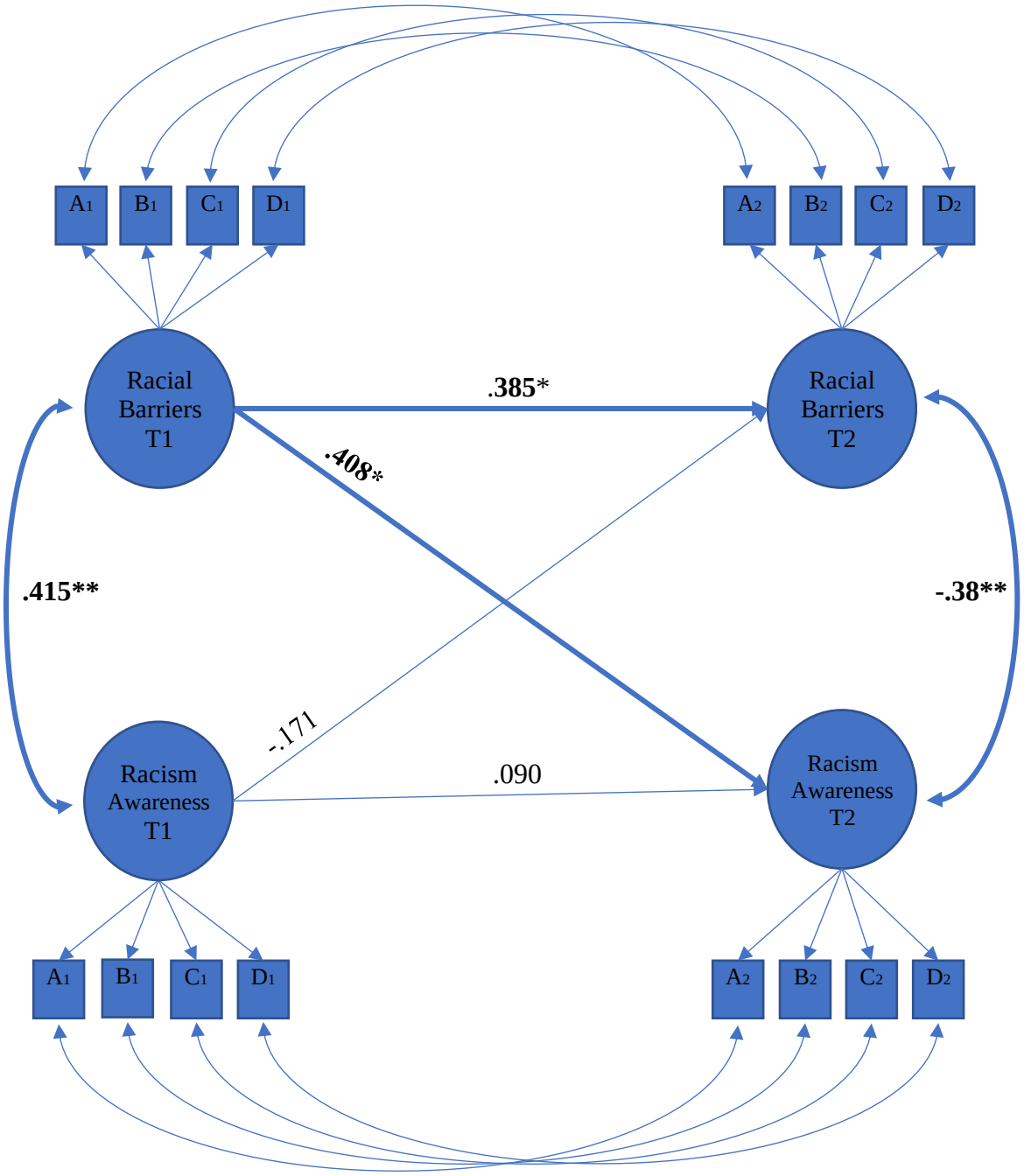
| Subscale | Item |
|---|---|
| Teacher racial discrimination | Teachers call on you less often than they call on other kids because you are Black? |
| | Teachers grade you harder than they grade other kids because you are Black? |
| | You get disciplined more harshly by teachers than other kids do because you are Black? |
| | Teachers think you are less smart than you really are because you are Black? |
| Peer racial discrimination | You are not picked for certain teams or other school activities because you are Black? |
| | That you get in fights with some kids because you are Black? |
| | That kids do not want to hang out with you because you are Black? |

Appendix F Achievement Gap Attribution Scale – Structural Subscale

| Subscale | Item |
|---|---|
| Structural | The mismatch between classroom culture and home culture for Black students. |
| | Test are biased against Black students. |
| | Teachers are less effective in teaching Black students. |
| | Racist/biased teachers against Blacks. |
| | Teachers have low expectations for Black students. |
| | White have more opportunities than Blacks. |

Appendix G Racial Barriers and Racism Awareness Cross-Lagged Model

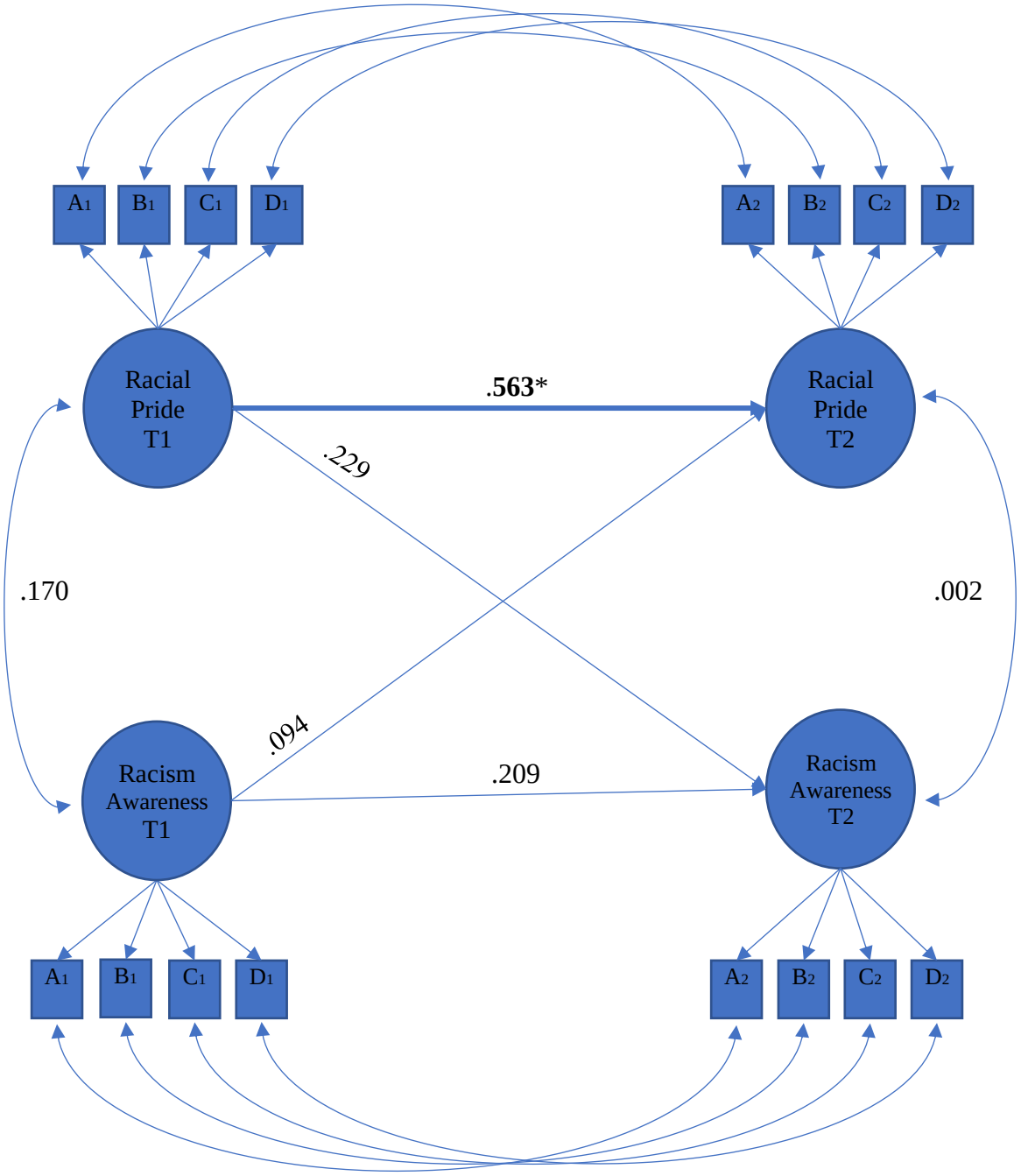
Figure A.3 Racial Barriers and Racism Awareness Cross-Lagged Model




*Note.* Bolded lines indicate significant paths. Gender, age, and district were added as covariates to model. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.

Appendix H Racial Pride and Racism Awareness Cross-Lagged Model

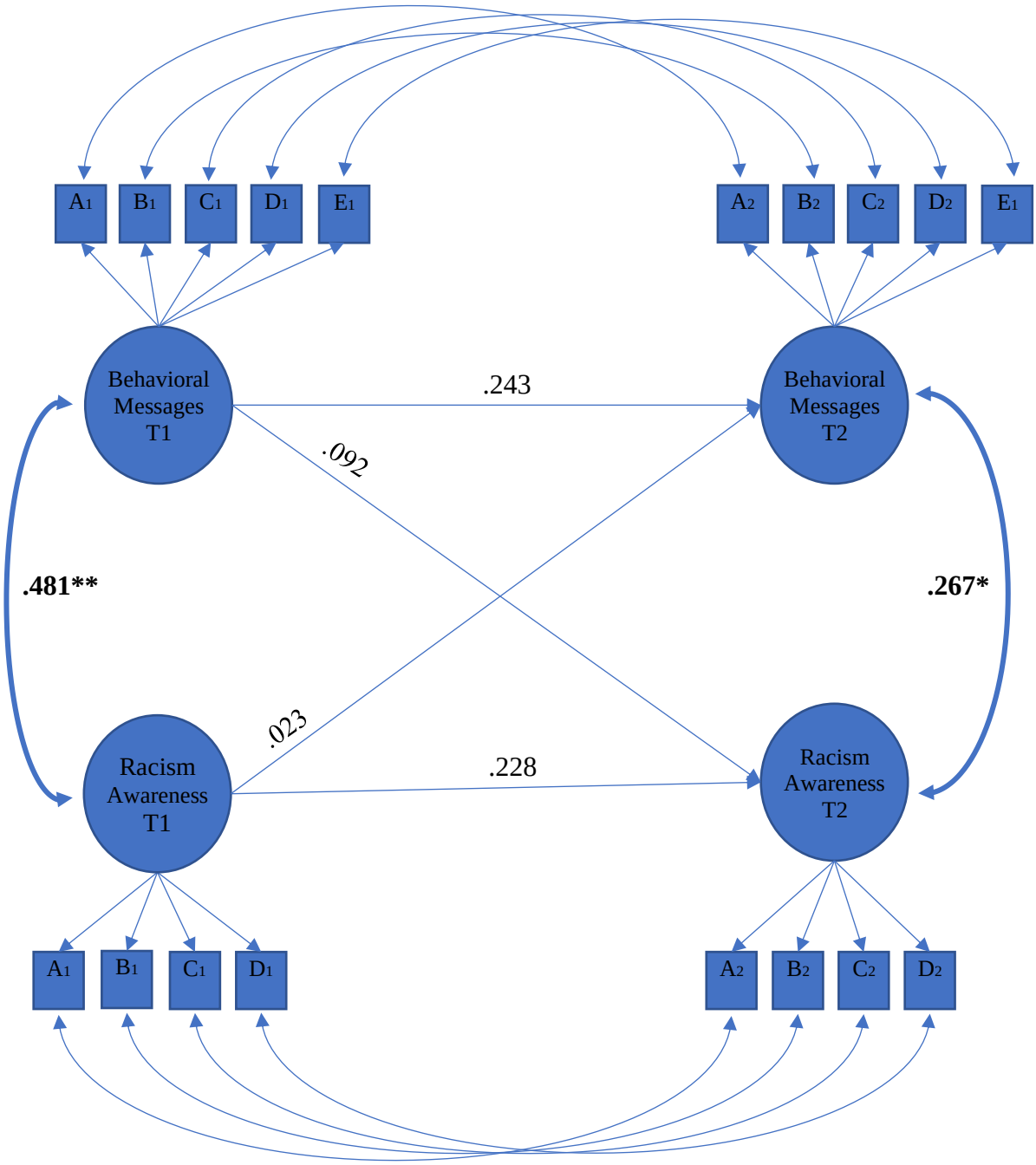
Figure A.4 Racial Pride and Racism Awareness Cross-Lagged Model




*Note.* Bolded lines indicate significant paths. Gender, age, and district were added as covariates to model. * $p < .05$.

Appendix I Behavioral Messages and Racism Awareness Cross-Lagged Panel Model

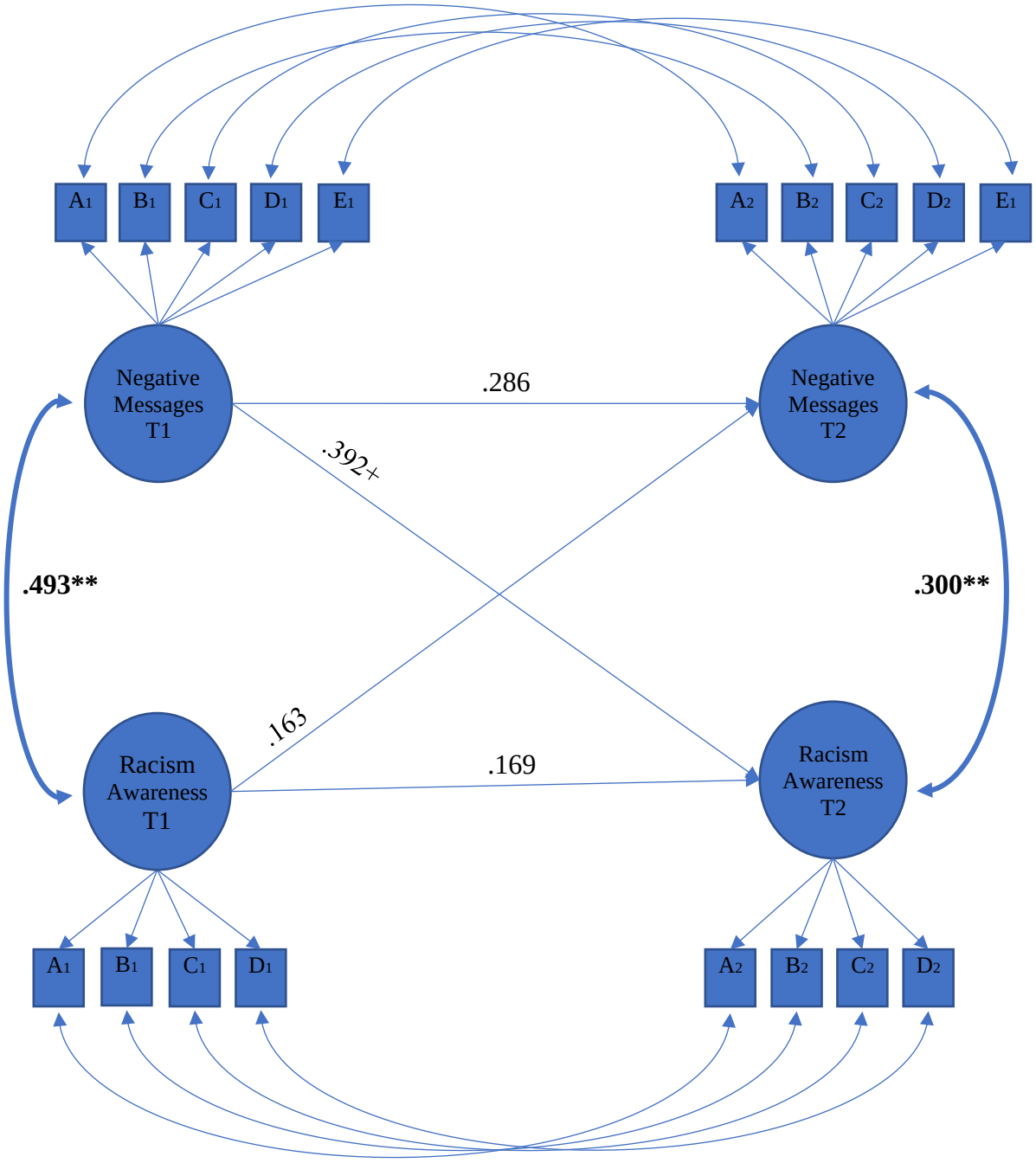
Figure A.5 Behavioral Messages and Racism Awareness Cross-Lagged Panel Model




*Note.* Bolded lines indicate significant paths. Gender, age, and district were added as covariates to model. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.

Appendix J Negative Messages and Racism Awareness Cross-Lagged Panel Model

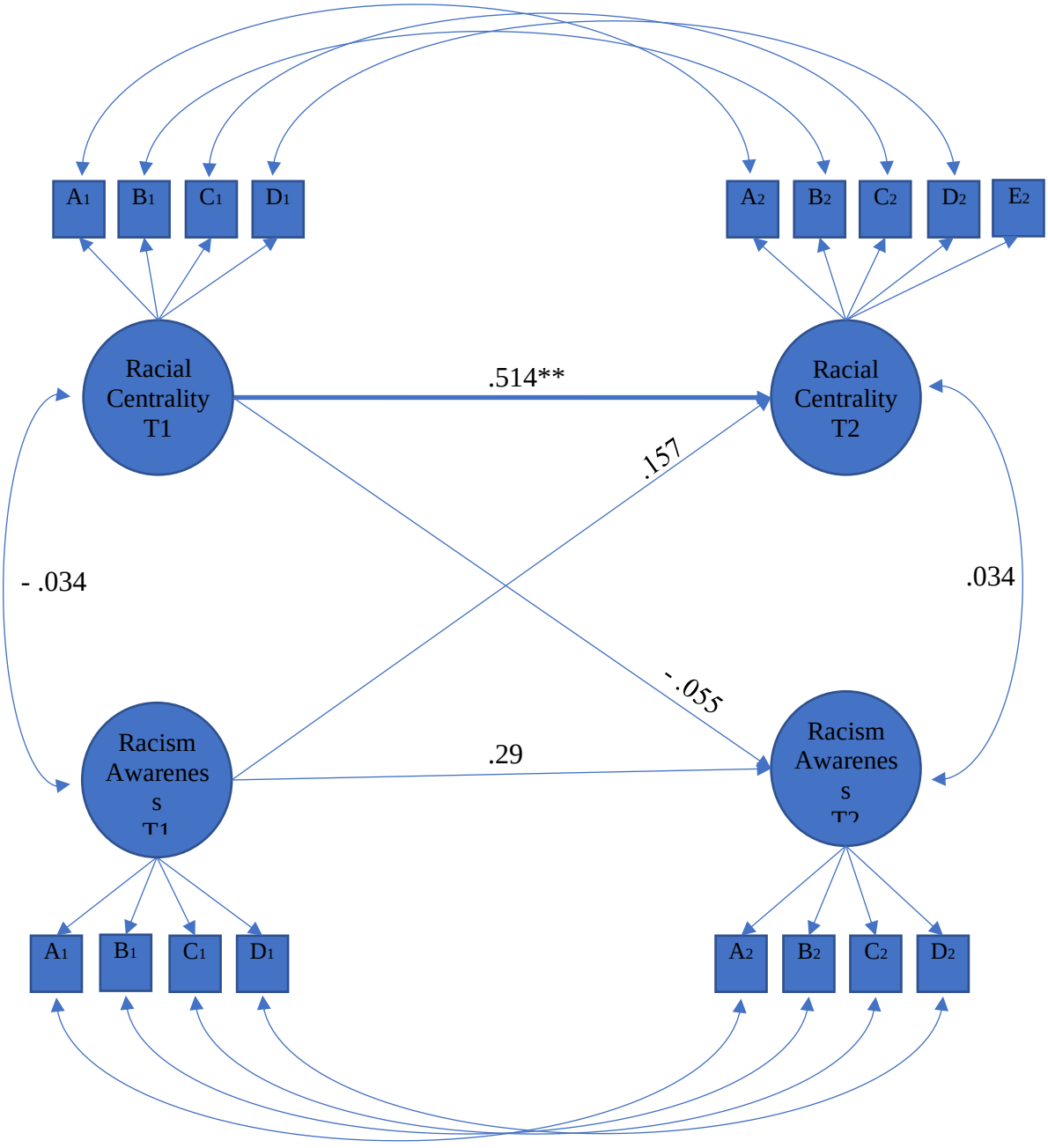
Figure A.6 Negative Messages and Racism Awareness Cross-Lagged Panel Model




*Note.* Bolded lines indicate significant paths. Gender, age, and district were added as covariates to model. ** $p < .01$. + $p < .10$.

Appendix K Racial Centrality and Racism Awareness Cross-Lagged Model

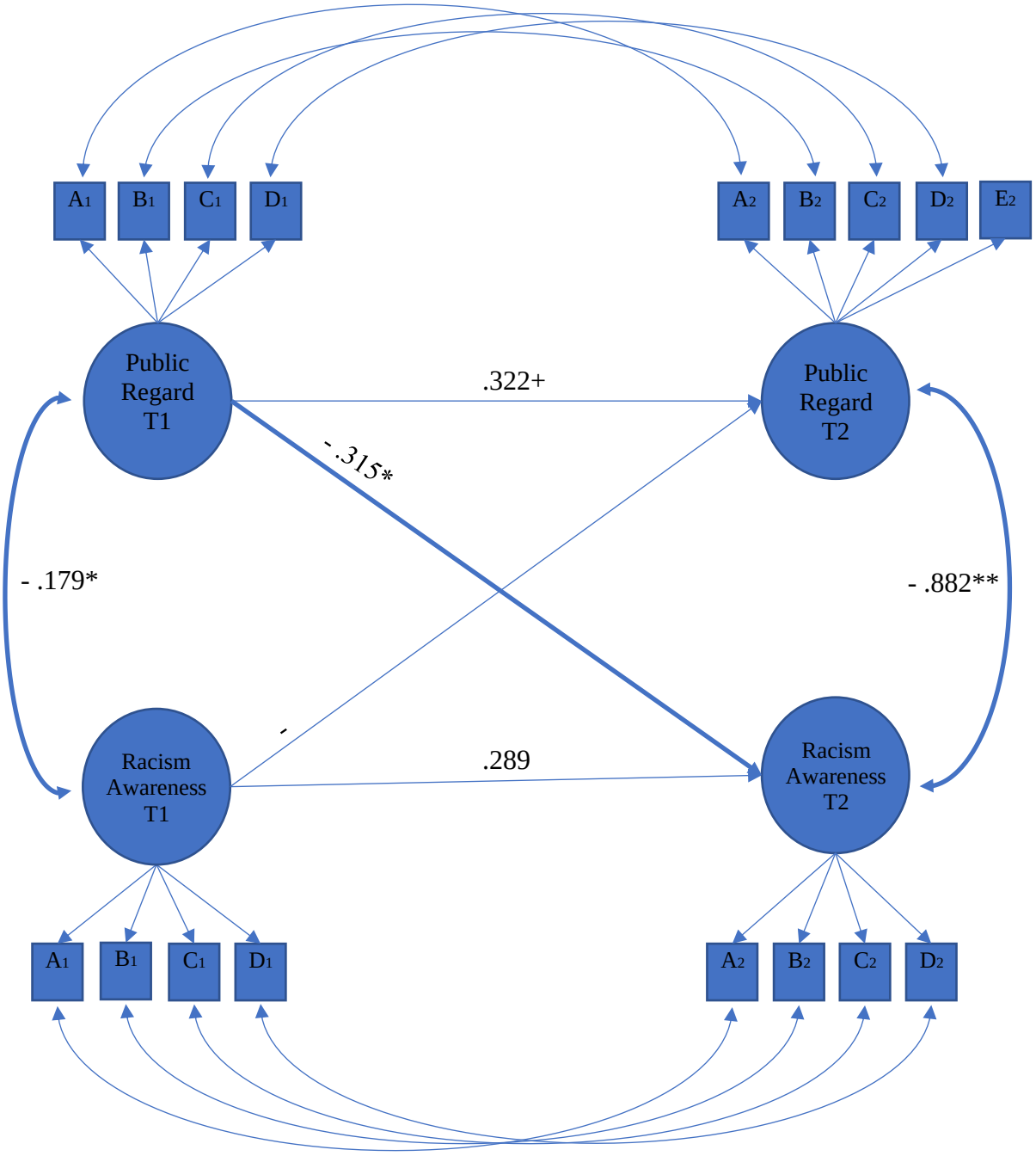
Figure A.7 Racial Centrality and Racism Awareness Cross-Lagged Model




*Note.* Bolded lines indicate significant paths. Gender, age, and district were added as covariates to model. ** $p < .01$.

Appendix L Racial Public Regard and Racism Awareness Cross-Lagged Model

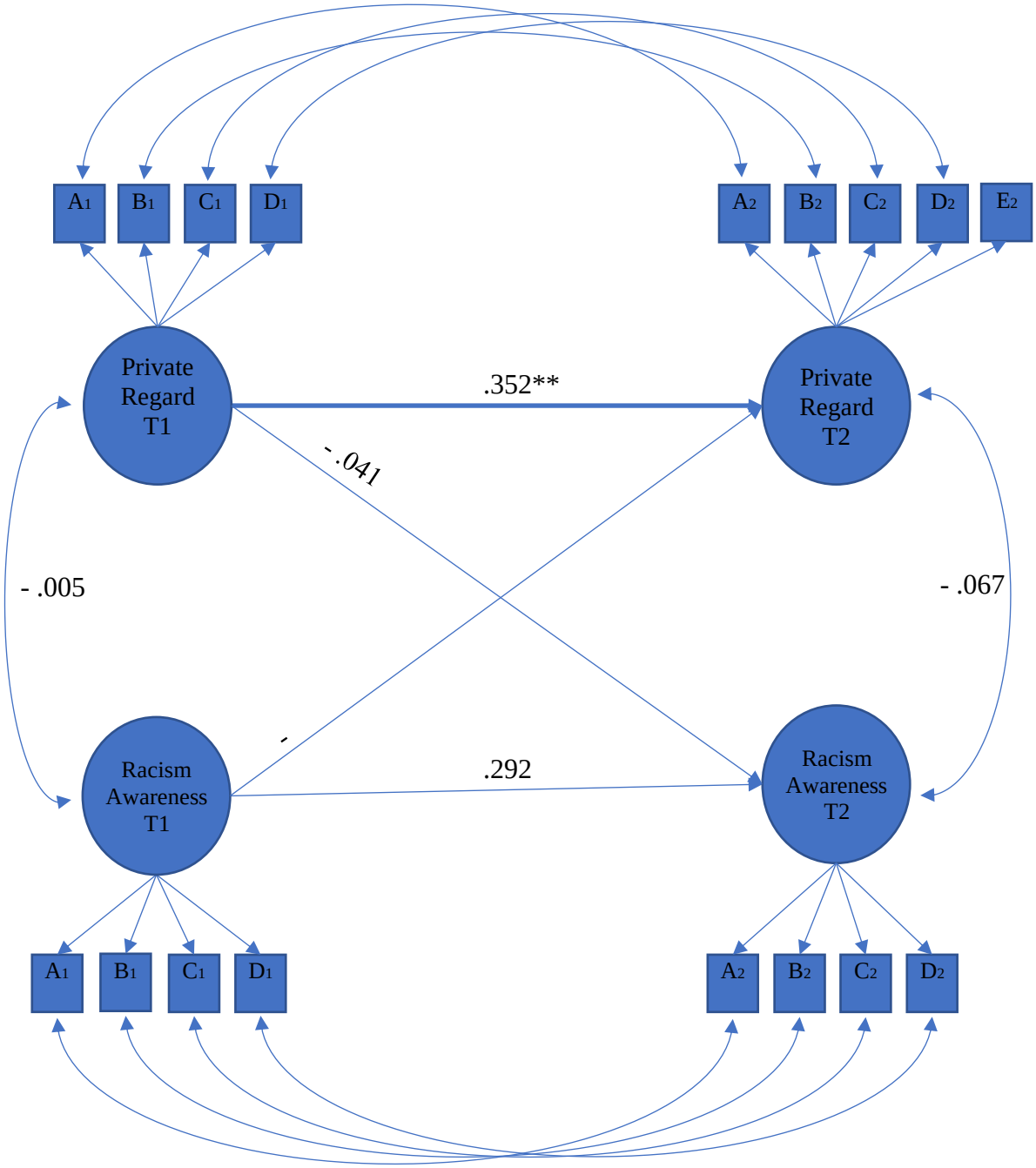
Figure A.8 Racial Public Regard and Racism Awareness Cross-Lagged Model




*Note.* Bolded lines indicate significant paths. Gender, age, and district were added as covariates to model. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. + $p < .10$.

Appendix M Racial Private Regard and Racism Awareness Cross-Lagged Model

Figure A.9 Racial Private Regard and Racism Awareness Cross-Lagged Mode




*Note.* Bolded lines indicate significant paths. Gender, age, and district were added as covariates to model. ** $p < .01$. *$p < .05$. + $p < .10$.

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